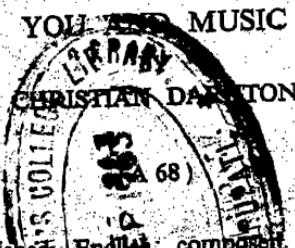


## PELICAN BOOKS

*Advisory Editors:* H. L. BEALES, Reader in Economic History, University of London; W. E. WILLIAMS, Director, the Army Bureau of Current Affairs; Secretary, the British Institute of Adult Education



6819

A distinguished English composer introduces the ordinary music lover to the significance of a wide range of music old and new outside the traditional repertory of standard classics. No technical knowledge of music is needed apart from familiarity with the general principles of musical notation. The book includes a discussion of the nature of music; an explanation of the development of European music from its earliest effective beginnings about the eleventh century, and a brief history of the orchestra with descriptions of the instruments in use to-day. There is a historical graph-chart which shows the years when notable composers were born and died, and a list of over a hundred gramophone records carefully selected to display to the best advantage the musical heritage which is ours to-day.



*Howard Coster*

### THE AUTHOR

CHRISTIAN DARNTON was born in Yorkshire in 1905. He evinced a passion for music, and commenced piano lessons at the age of four. His first compositions were written when he was nine years old. At fifteen he began to take lessons in composition, and studied under Harry Parjeon and Professor Charles Wood at Cambridge. In 1927 a concert of his chamber music was given at Grotian Hall, London. During 1928-9 Darnton lived in Berlin, where he studied with Max Butting. Returning to England he took an appointment as music-master at Stowe School and subsequently was Assistant Editor of *The Music Lover*.

Christian Darnton's compositions include concertos for piano, viola and harp; a considerable output of chamber music and several works for large orchestra. All of these works have been performed in Germany, South Africa, U.S.A., etc., as well as in England. His *Five Pieces for Orchestra* were among the three works chosen to represent this country at the Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music which took place in Poland in 1939. His *Stalingrad Overture*, performed at the Royal Albert Hall in March 1943, was broadcast in December of the same year. Latterly he has taken a keen interest in music for the theatre, for films, and for amateur orchestras and choirs. The author is at present engaged on his third symphony.

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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND (REVISED) EDITION

EVERY author is pleased when a second edition of his book is called for. In my own case I am particularly grateful to the publishers for their request to prepare a revised edition of this book. For not only does it afford me the opportunity to rectify some inaccuracies which were in the first edition, but it allows me to give the reader a necessary explanation concerning the writing of the original work.

I was engaged on the manuscript when war was declared in September 1939. It will be remembered that the Government of the day made everybody's flesh creep by envisaging immediate air-raids which would be on such a scale in London that every form of life would probably be extinct within a few days. The Government urged all those who were not compelled by circumstance to remain in the city to leave forthwith. Accordingly, I and my family packed up our household goods and departed for the country; where I continued writing about You and Music as well as I could.

It was not easy. All my books and music were in store. And when, some weeks later, I timidly ventured into London again, the British Museum (and all other museums) were shut. So I was marooned without any books of reference whatever.

This circumstance explains some of the errors which crept into the first edition. Other mistakes were due solely to my own ignorance, for which there is no excuse.

It was impracticable to issue the book with a warning note to the reader of these sad circumstances. I could but hope for the best. I am told, however, that several people have had orgies with blue pencils, and have indulged themselves with fierce attacks on me. However that may be (for only one of these adverse criticisms came my way), it seems that there has been sufficient demand for a book of this sort to justify a revised edition.

Re-reading the original book to-day is not unlike being confronted with some unpleasing photograph of myself, taken several years ago. I should have liked to have adjusted that vacant and puzzled expression, to have softened some of the glaring high-lights, to have modified the more obscure shadows.

... we have recast the features entirely, in conformity with the changes that have overtaken me. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to do more than correct some of the more outrageous defects.

With this intention I have done my best to remedy matters, in the intervals of duty with the Civil Defence Service. Many sections of the book have been entirely rewritten, since, with the march of time, I have been brought to alter some of the opinions which I formerly held. Notably, I have abandoned to a considerable degree the very subjectivist attitude which conditioned my approach to many aspects of music. In addition, the sections on The Nature of Musical Thought, Occasions for Music, and some of the historical sections, have been expanded. So the reader will now get more (and, I hope, better) value for the war-time price of ninepence than he did before. Which is as it should be.

I should perhaps add that this book does not profess to be a compendium wherein everyone can find exciting details of his Six Favourite Composers. Indeed, many quite well-known composers have found no place in the following pages—not because they are in any sense unworthy, but for the prosaic reason that there is no room for everybody in a book of this size and scope. For example, there are more composers sinned against than Sinding, who at least had the distinction of having his piano concerto played by Busoni.

I should like to mention my indebtedness to many friends who have been kind enough to give me advice and assistance in connection with this present edition; principally Dr. E. H. Meyer, who has allowed me the privilege of reading in manuscript his book *The Epic of English Chamber Music*. The many stimulating suggestions he put forward with regard to the historical section in particular have been a most valuable contribution. At the same time, I must make it clear that responsibility for the book as a whole is entirely mine.

With this apologia I recommend you to get down to the business of reading the book, in the hope that it will be helpful to you—and music.

CHRISTIAN DARNTON.

LONDON, October 1944.

## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THIS book is designed primarily for those who like music sufficiently to go to listen to it occasionally, for those who listen to music on the radio and on the gramophone. To write about music intelligibly and intelligently is difficult. To read about it is apt to be depressing. A certain number of technical terms are unavoidable; for this necessity I apologise. I have been compelled to assume that the reader knows where Middle C is on the piano and that he is conversant with the principles of musical notation by means of a system of lines and spaces on which various symbols are written. But it is not necessary for an understanding of this book that the reader is able to go to the piano and play music at sight.

Every time a composer is mentioned by name I have inserted in brackets the dates when he was born and when he died, when these are known. Most musical works cited as illustrations of my argument have against them an index number, thus: *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* [24]. If the reader refers to the end of the book (page 146), he will find a list of these works in numerical order together with the composer's name and the index number of the gramophone record on which they may be heard. Wherever possible the reader should obtain access to the records so that he can hear the music for himself.

I should like to make special mention of my indebtedness to Mr. Cecil Forsyth's invaluable book, *Orchestration*, from which most of the details of the various instruments of the orchestra are freely drawn; to Mr. Edwin Evans for his kind permission to quote at length from an article, "The Great Schism," which appeared in *The Music Lover* when he was Editor of that paper; and to many friends, notably Mr. Edward Clark, who have been good enough to make suggestions, amplifications and corrections of the text.

CHRISTIAN DARNTON.

## PART I

### I

#### THE PHYSICAL BASIS OF MUSIC

At the outset of this book I want to be quite sure that the reader and I agree on what we are talking about. My main intention is to write as simply and clearly as possible about music. I can foresee that this aim in itself will be difficult, owing to the very nature of music, which is intangible. So I propose to start off with the bare bones of music. I cannot help it if they are very dry.

Let us try to arrive at a few definitions. This may be best one, perhaps, by first considering not what music is, but what it is not. Music, says Don Juan in *Man and Superman*, is the brandy of the damned. This may be so. But it is not like a picture or a statue that you sit and look at and take your time over contemplating. It is not even very like a story or a poem, in which you can stop and re-read a passage several times. In other words, it is not static. It is movement: movement of sound. This movement produces audible patterns. These patterns, discernible to the ear, are also visible to the trained eye in the written notes. They are of four kinds: rhythmical patterns and metrical patterns, much the same as the rhythms and metres of a poem; and two patterns resulting from the "line" of a melody and ancillary to these, from the interplay of two or more melodic lines simultaneously.

Before we go any farther, two important distinctions must be made: the difference between rhythm and metre.

Rhythm, properly speaking, is the "swing" of a phrase. A phrase may be likened to a clause in written or spoken language. Two or more phrases (clauses) combine to make a period (sentence).

Both phrases and periods are bounded by Cadences, which are natural moments of repose, like punctuation.

Metre is the "pulse" or beat. It is very important to have this quite clear in your mind, otherwise confusion will result.

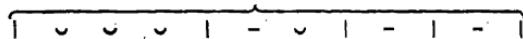
Nearly everybody misuses the word Rhythm. People talk of the "complicated rhythms" of dance-music. It is quite wrong. The rhythm of a ballroom dance tune is regular to the point of monotony; and must be so, in the nature of ballroom dancing, which demands regularly recurring four-bar phrases. What happens inside those phrases is often complicated in a more or less crude way. This is Accentuation. Strong accents are placed where the ear would expect weak ones, thus making what is called Sympathetic Rhythm.

To clinch the matter, and make sure of the distinction between Rhythm and Metre, it is quite possible to alter the metre without disturbing the rhythm. Thus:

*This is the house that Jack built.*

Here is the metrical scheme:

PHRASE



Now let us alter the metre:

*This is the house that Jackson built.*

The metrical scheme now is:



But the rhythm, the phrase, remains unaltered.

Again:

*This is the house that Jack Robinson built.*

Metre:

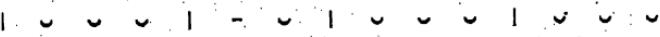


The rhythm still remains the same.

Finally:

*This is the house that Nebuchadnezzar built.*

Metre:



It may be noticed in passing that in this last instance the *sense*, the *meaning*, of the line is different. In the first three instances the meaning is:

*This is the house that Jack (Jackson, etc.) built.*

But in this last example the meaning is changed by shifting the stress. So that we are now emphasising that it was Nebuchadnezzar (and not anybody else) who built the house. Thus:

This is the house that *Nebuchadnezzar* built.

Here, now, is an illustration of a simple rhythm with a literary instance from a nursery rhyme:

I saw three ships come sailing by,  
Sailing by, sailing by,  
I saw three ships come sailing by,  
On New Year's day in the morning.

The rhythmical construction here is simple: two periods of four bars each.

(1) I saw three ships come   sailing by, (3) Sailing by,   sailing by,	(2) } First period. (2) I saw three ships come   sailing by, (3) On   New Year's day in the   morning.

It will be noticed that in this instance each period commences on a weak beat. It is also important to realise that rhythmical phrases and periods are not necessarily, or even generally, bounded by bar-lines.

Now as to Accents. I have purposely chosen this instance, ample in itself, to demonstrate that the bar-line can often be tyranny. The unknown composer of the tune to this rhyme as not subject to this trap. Its singers usually are. There, moreover, no sort of excuse in any song for misinterpreting the rhythm, if the composer has understood his b properly: the words give the clue, as in this instance. he sense, therefore, is: "I saw three SHIPS come sailing . ." Sung thus, the music makes sense. Only too often we hear: "I SAW three ships come sailing by." Which both grammatically and musically absurd.

As an example of such fatuity, one may examine the first line of the celebrated lyric from Tennyson's "Maud," as set to music by Balfe (1808-1870). That jaunty, Anglican cheer-

fulness makes it seem as if the young man was stressing it should be Maud who should come into the garden. The whole point of his request, however, was that it was no conservatory nor the dining-room, but the garden into which she should come. It is said that Tennyson was extremely annoyed with Balfe for this elementary blunder. For the song is written, it is impossible to make any other use of it than the one dictated by that unfortunate tune.

To return to our Ships.

As I have just said, the composer of the tune evidently understood the poem. But it may be held by some that the lines are misplaced. This is controversial ground. Discussions about the functions of the bar-line crop up like hardy annuals in most musical literature from time to time. In discussing the matter at all one immediately becomes involved in technicalities which are irrelevant to the purpose of this book. I propose to say no more than this: bar-lines in the main, a convenience for reading, like paragraphing or any other form of punctuation in literature.\*

In this case, the first period begins with a weak accent—I saw three ships come—and has a strong accent in the middle—I saw three SHIPS come. This is the metrical scheme which is extended to its completion, is:

I saw three ships come sailing by,  
Sailing by, sailing by,  
I saw three ships come sailing by,  
On New Year's day in the morning.

Having, as I hope, got this clear, let us recapitulate.

Music is movement. Rhythmic patterns form the basis of this movement. Inseparable from these are the Accents which make the metrical scheme.

Arising from this definition of the elementary basis of music, we see that it is perfectly possible, by definition

\* Bar-lines first became common during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when they were freely used merely as an aid to the eye in the full scores of music which at that time had a rhythmic and metrical elasticity and flexibility unknown before. The bar-line had developed into a tyranny which has tended to impose the rigidity of an unvarying recurring pulse. A reaction against this metrical monotony made itself effectively felt some thirty years ago.

have music which takes account of no other features than these two, Rhythm and Accent. In other words, beat out accented rhythms on a drum, and you already have music. True, it is music in its most primitive form. But no one who has heard oriental or African drumming will ever forget the pulsating thrill which really seems to have some elemental power capable of inducing a true state of exaltation.

Our next step is to introduce Melody; that is, an organised series of notes: to have, not only a drum of one pitch, or even of indefinite pitch, but to add a Tune. This may be sung or played on either a wind or stringed instrument.

In the simplest instance the Melody follows the accented rhythmical basis in unison. More highly developed music, however, soon breaks away from this simplicity; and the Melos, or tune, begins to have an independent life of its own. Men and women sing together. It is found that each sex has a natural division into high and low voices. The women are Soprano and Alto; the men, Tenor and Bass. All four voices sing the same tune at different pitches. This needs explaining more fully. And to do this I must digress.

\* \* \*

Having got as far as mentioning Melody, which is an organised series of notes, we must examine more fully what we mean by this.

We are now dealing with different Notes. Every note is related to another by what is called an Interval. I am compelled at this point to assume that the reader knows where Middle C is on the piano. From Middle C play all the white notes ascending in succession: D, E, F, G, A, B, C. The Intervals from the starting-point are as follows:

Middle C to D = a second	Middle C to A = a sixth
" " " E = a third	" " B = a seventh
" " " F = a fourth	" " C = an octave
" " " G = a fifth	

The phenomenon of the Octave is fundamental to the science of acoustics, or the study of sounds. Sound travels in "waves" in the air. These are caused by a regularly recurring series of vibrations of a wire or string, in the case of a piano or stringed instrument; or of a column of air in the case of a wind instrument. These vibrations set up

sympathetic movements in our ears and result in the apprehension of what we call a Sound. The extreme musically effective sounds are represented by the lowest A on the piano (28 vibrations per second) and the highest C (8,192 v.p.s.). If ever you have the opportunity to tune down a string on a piano or other instrument you will find that the resultant notes become lower and lower in pitch until they become inaudible. The string is vibrating too slowly for our ears to apprehend. At the other end of the scale the common bat, while flying, emits so high a note that it is only when it lowers its voice now and again that we can hear a very high-pitched squeak. Its song, mercifully, is beyond our range of hearing.

In parenthesis a similar phenomenon occurs with light-waves, red light at the lower end of the octave having 400 million million vibrations per second and violet light twice as many.

Middle C is today pitched at 256 v.p.s.\* This figure is more or less arbitrary. What I am leading up to in all this is the phenomenon of the Octave. The C one octave above Middle C has twice the number of vibrations per second: 512. C one octave above that has, again, 1,024 vibrations per second.

\* \* \*

We can now return to our Women and Men—Soprano, Alto, and Tenor, Bass—singing a tune. The differences between Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass are roughly a fourth or a fifth. Thus the ordinary soprano has a range of about Middle C to A, a thirteenth above; alto, from the G a fourth below Middle C to C a thirteenth above, and so on.

They all sing the same tune together at their various pitches. It is, in reality, only a single line of melody. Each moment of sound is said to form a Chord. A chord is defined as several notes sounding simultaneously. In the instance we are considering, of four voices singing the same

\* Since this was written the question of standardisation of pitch has cropped up again. There is now a recommendation that the A above Middle C should be fixed at 440 v.p.s. In the eighteenth century there were three different pitches in common use. Of these the lowest, the *Tief Kammerton*, was approximately one-and-a-half tones lower than our standard pitch to-day. This may account for the impracticability of some of the music of the period when played at its apparent pitch. (See page 65.)

tune at different pitches, the chord remains the same throughout. We now have Harmony—a succession of chords. This style of writing is known as Early Organum [1].

A fresh emancipation takes us one step farther. Each one of the four voices begins to lead a separate life of its own (Later Organum [2]). After a certain point in the development of complexity, it can be said that every one of the four voices constitutes a separate melodic line. This is Counterpoint—the interplay of several independent melodic lines which yet fuse into an organic unity—which may be exemplified in the *Sanctus* from the *Missa Papae Marcelli* by Palestrina (1525-1594) [3].

With many apologies for this forbidding opening, I must touch briefly on a few more of the dry bones of Music before going on to something more lively.

We must take a look at the European Musical Vocabulary of Sounds. I have explained the phenomenon of the Octave, which is a misleading word inasmuch as it leads one to expect a whole divided into eight parts. So it is. But these eight parts are a selection only of the twelve equally spaced notes which comprise the Octave.\* The ascending or descending series of twelve notes is called the Chromatic Scale (Greek *chroma*, colour). It must be clearly understood that it is only in very recent times indeed that the vocabulary of music has included all of these twelve notes. It has been the usual custom to select from these twelve notes seven, or even five only, which the composer has used as the sole basis of his musical thought. The reason for this is that the natural harmonic scale has been taken as what may be called the fundamental premise of music all over the world. (See page 41.) (But see also pages 102 *et seq.*)

\* By "equally spaced notes" I mean that every note is divided from its neighbour by a mathematically equal interval. By dividing the octave Middle C (256 v.p.s.) and the C above it (512 v.p.s.) into twelve equal parts, it will be seen that the difference between every semitone, or adjacent note, is governed by a common factor, making a geometrical progression. This factor is  $\sqrt[12]{2}$ , or 1.05946. This is only theoretical perfection. Without going into the matter fully, it may be said that it is found that fractions of vibrations occur in this scheme. These are eliminated by raising some notes and lowering others. The difference between adjacent semitones then, in actual fact, works out at about 6 per cent. (For fuller explanation of this rather difficult subject see the section on the Genesis of Music, page 102. Consult also Jeans' *Science and Music*.

It must suffice to say that this or that series of notes, known as a Scale, or more properly a Mode, forms the basic vocabulary of music.

To give an example: the Pentatonic Scales (Five-note Scales) form the basis of all known music in cultures which have reached a certain level.

One of these Pentatonic Scales corresponds to the five black notes on the piano keyboard. It is a rather startling thought that out of some one or other of these five-note systems the great majority of the world's music has been built. They are found in all European folk-music, in Javanese [4], Bali [5] and Chinese [6] music. My knowledge does not extend beyond these limits. But I dare say that the five-note principle can be shown to extend farther.

Certainly there are plenty of familiar examples to hand. *Auld Lang Syne* and the recent popular song *I've got spurs that jingle, jangle, jingle* are two out of many tunes which are built entirely on five notes.

For the present, all I wish to say is that two fundamental things assert themselves in music all over the world: these are the fixed Tonic, or key-note, around which the melody can clearly be shown to revolve; and the Dominant, the note a fifth above the Tonic—where C is the Tonic, G is the Dominant. These two focal points may be regarded as the primary relationships, being simultaneously antithetic, sympathetic, contrasting and unifying.

The Indians, for example, may divide their octave into five, six or seven parts (as indeed they do). Nevertheless the relationship between the Tonic and Dominant is as marked as it is in ancient Jewish, Arab, Polynesian and European music.

Further mention of this subject is made in the section on Notation (page 39).

Before we dismiss in a few lines such a subject, which has already been treated in many books, I must finally explain the nature of what are called the Church Modes.

These, too, have been the subject of learned treatises. I do not intend to expatiate on these either. The limits of this book are bounded by practical application of the present-day listener to music in ordinary currency.

The ancient Christian Church employed various vocabularies, or Modes, which were in common use up to three hundred years ago. They correspond roughly to scales

played on the white notes of the piano beginning on D, E, F, G, A, B, C in turn. These Modes have tiresome names with which I will not burden your memory. Of these Modes only two have come down to us. The remainder were outmoded. These two are the one starting on C and the one starting on A. These are now known as the Major and Minor modes respectively, from the facts that the C Major and A Minor Modes are characterised by a greater, or Major, Third and a lesser, or Minor, Third respectively—the Third above C being E (two whole tones) and the Third above A being C (one-and-a-half tones).

These Major and Minor Modes are of primary importance in all that follows. Bear them well in mind, as well as the fundamental relationship between the Tonic and Dominant. These points are of importance, inasmuch as what we are ordinarily accustomed to think of as "a tune" tends to start from and return to the Tonic, or Key-note; and any piece of music which has a subsidiary tune traditionally introduces this Second Subject in the key of the Dominant.

In the hope that we have got this clear, I now leave this for the moment. References will of necessity be made to these important points later.

\* \* \*

To recapitulate: These, then, are our primary definitions on which we must be agreed before going farther.

Music has as its basis a recurring series of accented rhythms. Wedded to this is an organised series of notes known as Melody. This combination, in its highest development, becomes Counterpoint: that is, the interplay of two or more interdependent melodic lines.

Music is the ordered succession of a series of sounds, this series consisting of an octave divided (in modern Europe and the Americas) into twelve equal parts.

*(A discussion on the function of silence in music, which, as far as I am aware, has escaped general attention, would take us rather deeper into technicalities than is desirable. But I should like to advance the view that silence should be recognised as more than a mere absence of sound. Silence is, in fact, indispensable in music; even if the periods of silence are so brief as not to be noticed consciously. Silence is the opposite of sound. These two opposites together form the unity which we call music.)*

## II

### THE NATURE OF MUSICAL THOUGHT

If at this point it is presumptuous of me to hope that you and I are agreed upon what we are talking about, at least I can surely say that by now you understand what it is that I propose to discuss.

We are not dealing with the plastic arts. We are not dealing with literature. We are dealing with music, the ordered succession of sounds, and what happens to them.

This, then, is the composer's world. He lives mostly in a world of sound-fantasy as opposed to the pictorial images of most people's imaginations and the word-images of the literary man. In practice there may not be such a sharp definition between the one fantasy-type and the other. There are quite possibly people whose day-dreams—whose fantasy-lives—do not include music at all. Possibly they never have "a tune running in their heads." I do not know. But I should imagine that most people are sometimes subject to this crudest form of sound-fantasy. All I am saying is that the composer is a type of person whose fantasy-life is spent almost entirely in sound-images. Beethoven (1770-1827), in a letter to a friend, wrote: "Every day I come nearer to the aim which I can feel, though I cannot describe it, and on which alone your Beethoven can exist. No more rest for him!" Again: "I live only in my music, and no sooner is one thing done than the next is begun." Such a person is to say the least, musical. If, allied to this, there is what is commonly called a creative urge, he is a composer.

In the last resort, the composer writes music in response to the social urge to communicate ideas; ideas, moreover, which cannot be expressed adequately by any other means. It is this ineffable quality of music which constitutes one of the most formidable obstacles to any attempt to discuss its nature.

I know of nothing more difficult than trying to explain the nature of musical thought, and making it clear what kind of animal a composer is. There are several ways of looking at it. The desire to create is in all of us from infancy. Without going too far into the question, it is a matter of common observation that every child delights in making

something. There is the man-god idea in all of us. At least, that is one way of putting it.

Another approach is the biological one. All life is a compromise, within varying degrees, between the organism adapting itself to its environment and adapting its environment to itself. The higher forms of life appear to spend most of their activities in the second way. Man's present environment is almost entirely of his own making. He shuts out the vagaries of climate by building houses and clothing himself. His feet are not swift enough: he rides animals, builds vehicles for them to draw, invents locomotives and automobiles. He refuses to be tied to the dry land: he builds boats, he flies. He has ideas: he must communicate them by the spoken, the written, the printed word. He transmits them through the telephone, by means of the radio. He feels the urge, caused by who knows what impulse, to please his eye in a different way from the mere contemplation of the life around him: he draws, paints. He even distils perfumes. He beats on a hollowed log, a drum. He blows down a reed pipe, draws a bow across a stretched string. He makes music.

In a sense, it can be said that a composer writes music because no other music pleases him adequately.

Since the composer is primarily, as I have said, a person whose fantasy-life consists mainly of sound-images, as opposed to the more usual visualiser, it follows that before we begin to take into account other factors in his make-up he must be an unusual person. Can we describe him more closely?

Lytton Strachey once said that it was probably always disastrous not to be a poet. It is an irritating remark. It has about it an air of pregnancy which proves on examination to be a purely fleeting inflation such as has deceived so many people who are at all apprehensive that there may, after all, be something in it. It has, further, the appeal of the slogan which, as aphoristic writers such as Shakespeare, Goethe and Shaw have realised, has the value of apparently putting in a nutshell that which can be properly expressed only in an entire book. It is, finally, a misleading statement. The implications are those which are contained in that other dictum that all men are liars.

In so far as either statement is true, it can be said that all men sometimes have poetic moments, moments when they transcend themselves and become almost-poets, like the drab

little man in James Joyce's story viewing the sunset across the Liffey; and all men often lie.

There is, then, some truth in Lytton Strachey's rather tiresome remark. What is a poet? A highly imaginative person, among other things. The quality of "imaginativeness" is common to all artists. That is, they retain in a marked degree the child's ability to create a world for themselves. In passing, it is one of the functions of art to create an other-world for those who by nature are able to appreciate what the artist has to say, as it were.

I must insist here that there is not and cannot be an absolute standard of beauty (or anything else) in these matters. I will return to this point in a moment. Let me first continue my portrait of an imaginative sound-fantast whom we call a composer.

I believe it to be the common experience of all creative artists that, on the completion of a work, they are filled with an elation, a sense of achievement co-existing with a passionate desire to communicate their latest work to sympathetic minds, a nexus of such feelings which may be comparable to those of a scientist on the solution of a problem in original research. All these, and possibly more, emotions and desires are intertwined so that now one seems predominant and now another.

Music, considered strictly as an art, is the youngest of the arts. Any art is a vehicle for the communication of ideas. Theoretically a musical idea should be expressible only in terms of sound; a pictorial idea only in terms of line, related planes and colour. And so on. Theoretically, I repeat, an idea expressed in one medium should not be capable of transmission into another. But this is not strictly true. There is such a thing as "programme music," music which, if not necessarily or always directly representational in an onomatopoeic sense, nevertheless is attached to some literary label. This aspect of music will be discussed later.

Given the quality of mind—to use a clumsy phrase for lack of a better—capable of significant ideas, the rest of the work of composition is largely a matter of mechanics. We have now arrived at a point in our analysis when we can say that music consists of ideas and their treatment. By this I do not mean a necessarily deliberate act of routine construction: some of a composer's finest achievements can be arrived at in a flash of what is commonly called "inspiration."

the other hand, an act of deliberate reflection, a consciously purposeful decision, can also be equally successful.

In short, the legend of the artist as a so-called romantic figure whose musical or pictorial thoughts obey no known laws and whose personal life must necessarily be interestingly outrageous is nonsense. Creative activity involves a great deal of real hard work, strenuous "slogging" mental labour which can leave the artist prostrate and exhausted.

Every one of us is compelled to believe that he is fundamentally "the right kind of person"—soldier, scientist, gentleman or thief. If we cease to hold this belief we commit suicide. Many of us—and this is particularly applicable to artists—are so convinced that we are of the elect, that we become active and even aggressive proselytisers. It may even be said that one of the functions of the artist is to proselytise and to proclaim: "Here is this work! It is mine! In it I reveal new beauties! Look and listen!"

Speaking for the moment as a composer, I must in a very real sense dissociate my music from what is consciously and controllably *me*. I cannot help what I have done, what music I have written. It is no more me—and no less—than the shape of my nose.

Can I define the portrait more clearly still?

The desire for recognition and acclamation is present in all of us. It may well be said that in part, at least, the artist is an exhibitionist. It is surely true of what are called interpretative artists such as actors, conductors and musical performers generally. And why not? Since Freud came on the scene to enliven our bed-time reading a conventional stigma has attached itself to the term exhibitionist, as if any such manifestation were but the penumbra of some shadowy individual undressing at his window in the belief, usually mistaken, that the spectacle will interest the girl on the opposite side of the road.

As to the *nature* of musical ideas, the *kind* of music that a composer writes, I believe that it is beyond question conditioned by social environment. We all know what is meant by that loose term "eighteenth-century music." But why is it that Beethoven (for example) wrote music in the particular style (convention) that he did? Why didn't he write cantatas as Bach did? or waltzes like Weber's? Clearly, I think, Beethoven's musical ideas were conditioned by his

social environment. The social unrest of his time, reflected in the French Revolution of 1791, followed by the wider consequences in other European countries, is clearly reflected in his music—as witness the *Eroica* Symphony (originally dedicated to Napoleon) and his opera *Fidelio*. The pietism of the early eighteenth century, itself a social symptom, is similarly clearly reflected in the chromaticism of Bach, the paid employee of the Church.\* The glitter of the Congress of Vienna and the court of the Empress Marie Louise no less clearly produced Weber's waltzes.

The later phase of the "Romantic Movement" shows a distinct tendency of composers to rebel against the social (bourgeois-capitalist) society which they were compelled to serve for economic reasons. If, that is, the composer of this (or any other) period did not supply the kind of music for which people were willing to pay, he had to accept the alternative of "starving in a garret," there being no Public Assistance Boards in those days. And, in fact, this is precisely what happened in the period of the rising class-conflict to artists of integrity, who refused to prostitute themselves to the vulgar tastes of their rich *parvenu* patrons, and *turned in upon themselves* as the only means of maintaining their self-respect. Consequently, this introverted attitude produced an art that was rejecting the world and exalting the "individual" to an altogether disproportionate, and even morbid, degree.

Many people have lamented the apparent lack of any objective standard of assessment of works of art. This absence of criteria is most manifest in music and painting. One cannot discuss anything without attempting to translate it into words. One can criticise a book, using the author's own weapons. But how can one say anything useful about da Vinci's "Mona Lisa" without, for example, mentioning that elusive smile, the significance of which has puzzled many worthy people for four-and-a-half centuries? True, one can pick on technical conventions and observe the artist obeying or disregarding them. Even so, the poverty of real meaning in such "criticism" is shown in the fact that art-critics and music-critics borrow from each other's preserves and talk of "the rhythm of a line," "the orchestral colour" and so on. This is so manifestly futile a disguise of the impossibility of

\* I must beg the reader to realise that this is a statement of fact and not a belittlement of Bach.

saying anything on these lines which has any meaning at all that the wise man reads no farther.

In short, it may be contended that, although a great work of art is always recognisable as such by some people, no definition of its intrinsic qualities is possible.

But this line of argument seems to lead us to the conclusion that any assessment of the value of a work of art is a purely subjective affair. In other words, that it is a matter solely of opinion. I believe that this is incorrect. The fallacy lies in the attempt to arrive at what learned people call the quiddity of an object: that is, the essential quality that makes it what it is.

I regard this point as of such great importance, since it affects not only our attitude to music and the arts generally but to the whole world around us, that I will try to explain as simply as I can precisely what is the issue.

A common object such as a stool is as devoid of meaning in itself as a tetrahedron, or any other shape. The meaning, the properties and functions of a stool can be understood only by reference to its *social purpose*.

In fact a stool would have no significance, it would not even exist, unless there were the need for someone to sit on it. The need to sit on an easily movable object which is more comfortable and more socially convenient than the ground could arise only at a certain level of culture. There are in the world to-day millions of people who ordinarily interpose nothing between the naked ground and the bare seat that God gave them. Yet, given the social opportunity, these same people are perfectly capable of acquiring university degrees of distinction. Any "race-theory" of "innate inferiority" is thereby refuted. The fact that they do not produce stools and pianos is entirely explicable by the formula: *the social conditions wherein such things can be produced, or are even necessary, are not present*.

A stool and a string quartet are expressions of a social necessity. *Their full significance can be appreciated only by reference to the social conditions which produced them.*

This line of inquiry, no matter what the subject or object may be, is the only one that can yield positive answers.

Similarly, an attempt to assess the value, significance or beauty of a work of art must take into account its *social function*.

The influence of the social environment on the composer

is, therefore, a determining factor in the kind of music he writes. And if one attempts to arrive at an analysis without taking the social factor into account, one ends only by formulating a sterile catalogue of unrelated subjective events. This is the source of the interminable wrangles over such questions as: "Is Beethoven a greater composer than Bach?"—which is pretty well on the same level as an argument about the relative merits of a violet and an onion. Few people, I imagine, would like their steak flavoured with violets; and fewer still would deliberately have a dash of onion on their handkerchiefs.

The section on the Genesis of Music will throw more light on this. For the present, then, that is all I propose to say about the materials of our subject.

### III

#### KINDS OF MUSIC

BEFORE we go any farther I want to discuss briefly two supposedly different kinds of music. I will pose a question: Is music emotional or intellectual? More particularly, is there one kind of music that is emotional, another that is intellectual? If we say Yes, what do we mean?

First of all let us examine the questions. By emotional music we mean music that has its origin, as it were, in the heart rather than in the head, which latter we commonly suppose to be the source of that other kind of music which we wrongly, as I hope to show, call intellectual.

All thoughts, with the possible exception of calculations in abstract figures, that is, pure mathematics, either derive from the emotions or are strongly influenced by them.

It is, perhaps, too easy to read into the state of mind of a composer in the act of writing music many things that are not consciously or even unconsciously present. The opponents of the "bottled thought" school of composition, according to whom the composer sits and fills himself with lovely thoughts and then goes and writes a rhapsody, have a great deal to be said in their favour. Nevertheless, though it may be extravagant to suppose too

close a connection to exist between a man's emotions and his artistic creations, that such a connection is there cannot be denied. This is more obvious with regard to literature than to music, which deals with abstract ideas. It is, for instance, easily demonstrable in the case of song-writing, where the music has a distinctive flavour taken from the text, or the composing of Programme Music, which purports to illustrate a definite story or programme. (I shall have more to say about this later.)

If taxed closer, I should say that to get much nearer to any definitive clue to the problem is impossible; since if the ideas in the composer's mind were reproducible in words he would write a book, not music.

I doubt very much the possibility of "intellectual" music. To think of music-writing in such terms is confusion of thought. I prefer to oppose the Aural aspect and the Visual aspect. Neither is separable from the other. In contrapuntal music, for example, the visual aspect plays a very important part indeed. And I am tempted to see a great significance in the choice of note-patterns on paper.

Returning to the question in this light, one must clearly differentiate between the state of mind of the composer and that of the listener. Obviously music cannot of itself be emotional, intellectual or anything else. In the same way, a steam-hammer has no effect unless it hits an object. We are up against something very like the potential energy of the physicists. And the measure of this depends on the object under the hammer. Therefore, when people say "modern music is ugly," all they mean is that its effect on them is unpleasant.

From this arise the stupid, unavailing and often harsh "criticisms," based necessarily on personal reactions. That same imagined piece of "modern music," cited above, is potentially capable of arousing every shade of feeling from bitterest distaste to ardent worship, the only approximate canon of exact criticism being the technical merits and defects in workmanship; and such judgment is by no means indisputable.

Just as no two people are physically alike, no two are mentally so: their psychological make-ups are different. Returning to our steam-hammer analogy once more: put two people in front of a machine that will give each a punch of thirty pounds, one will stagger, the other will fall

down. The emotional punch of a piece of music likewise will have varying effects on different listeners.

Despite the vaunted Physiology of Criticism expounded by Mr. Ernest Newman, the thing, but for one factor, would resolve itself into an expression of personal reaction, the only things making criticism worth while being the writer's own musical qualifications for discerning faulty craftsmanship and whatever literary knack he may possess to make what he writes attractively readable.

I here deliberately emphasise by repetition that that one factor, which alone can rescue us from the intolerable conclusion that assessment of a work of art is purely a matter of opinion, is the ability of the critic (listener) to relate the particular work of art under discussion to some single feature which is a denominator common to all arts of all periods. If such a common denominator can be found, we shall be provided with a universal yard-stick which will enable us to assess the "value" of a work of art.

If there is such a common denominator, what is it?

All attempts to localise individual qualities such as "genius" and "artistic appreciation" have demonstrably failed to provide a solution to the problem. The answer, I believe, is to be looked for in the realms of some conditioning circumstance which acts upon all and sundry in varying degrees and in different ways. There is only one such conditioning circumstance to which we are all subject: and that is our *social environment*.

If, therefore, I may deal once more in one of those dangerous things, analogies, I would point to the old saw about the bad workman blaming his tool. If we do not like certain music, the fault, if fault it can be called, lies in ourselves. Mr. Newman, of whom I personally am a great admirer, is musician enough to see what there is to be seen in the music of Schönberg (*b.* 1874). But for him, as he frankly confesses, although all the machinery of music is there, the results when heard are not music to him, and mean nothing or very little to him. But that is a confession of a limitation in himself, not a criticism of the music. As far as I am aware, Mr. Newman is quite unable to explain why he does not care for such music. Any plea that Mr. Newman's eminence endows him with a peculiar sensibility is inadequate because, as it happens, his opinion on the subject of Schönberg is widely shared. If his opinion was shared by nobody,

society would very properly lock him up in an asylum, together with other unfortunates whose views on certain questions no one agrees with. We are compelled, therefore, to believe that there is in the music itself some intrinsic characteristic which gives rise to so widely held an opinion. We will attempt to analyse this quality in the Section on the Genesis of Music.

All this has been a digression.

In conclusion, it may be said that there are not two kinds of music, the one emotional, the other intellectual, but many shades of *intellectualised* music.

All thought, as I shall show in the next section, must be cast into recognised or recognisable forms to be communicable. This casting is a process of intellectualisation. The difference between a Chopin prelude and a Bach fugue is fundamentally one of degree; although it is true that at a certain point the *amount* of intellectualisation produces a music that is distinctively different in kind.

Whether we prefer the minimum of intellectualisation, that is, music that relies for its appeal on the emotion that gave it birth rather than on the more enduring kind that has passed through the crucible of the intellect—which also, be it noted, can induce equally powerful emotional reactions—rests with ourselves.

## IV

### HOW MUSIC IS MADE

#### (i) MUSICAL FORMS

IN Section II I attempted to give an impression of the nature of musical thought. Having done my best to capture for the reader a specimen composer, let me try to show something of his musical activities before we put him in a killing-bottle and mount him on a pin as the first of the exhibits which, I hope, will presently come to light in the course of this book. It may not, indeed, be too much to hope that from time to time we shall be able to add to our portrait of him; for do not imagine that I am claiming that we have anything like enough data at present.

I now want to discuss the methods by which the composer communicates his musical ideas to the listening world. The first step is to consider Musical Form.

To make a musical idea, or any idea, communicable, must be cast into a recognised or recognisable mould form. A sequence of beautiful words may seem of intense significance to the person uttering them; may, even, give the listener a certain feeling of "atmosphere." But unless the words are arranged on some basis of conventional syntax and with some reference to an agreed grammar, the idea behind the words cannot be apprehended with any accuracy.

The questions of accuracy and truth are in this connection closely bound together. The degree of accuracy (truth) contained in a statement must vary with the nature of the thought, and therefore with the symbols employed.

The theoretical accuracy of a mathematical statement far exceeds its practical application: it is seldom that more than six places of decimals are of practical use, since, for the carrying out of an idea in, say, engineering, one-millionth of an inch is near enough to the "truth" of the matter—although physicists can deal on paper with quantities so small as to be beyond the limits of microscopic vision, these being bounded by the length of light-waves.

The vehicles of ordinary thought, vocalised sounds and their written symbols, are scarcely comparable in the ability accurately to convey "true meaning." The most that can be said is that words "work" for all ordinary purposes and that is not saying very much. It is at best a loose statement, since much depends on the language employed.

Now musical ideas are essentially fantastic. The utmost care has to be taken by a composer to put across his idea with maximum effect. Like other languages, musical language is constantly changing. From time to time new conventions arise, born of social necessity. Some persist for centuries; some drop out of use, perhaps to be resuscitated by a later generation; probably none is perpetual and immutable.

Basically comes the statement of the idea, generally the "tune" or motive. Just as most people can recognise a bad tune as bad, so some people can recognise a good tune badly stated.

It is, then, the composer's first care to see to it that by every technical resource at his disposal he comes as near as is physically possible to stating his basic idea accurately and comprehensibly. Its statement must be satisfying.

But depending on the nature of the idea is whether

imple statement is adequate for the composer's purpose, or whether the idea and the musical implications latent in it should be, or are susceptible of being, expanded and developed. I should warn the reader that in saying this I am expressing a personal view—by no means an eccentric one. But one should, perhaps, take into account the dictum of that eminent French composer and teacher Vincent d'Indy (1851–1931) that any musical idea is capable of application as the subject-matter of a slight piano piece, of a String Quartet, or as the basis of a Symphony.

We had got as far as saying that the composer must state his idea, his subject, as lucidly as he can.

He must now "decide" what to do with his material. I say "decide" in inverted commas; since I find that in writing down the processes of composition it is practically impossible accurately to differentiate between a fully conscious and calculated act on the part of the composer and a semi-conscious or unconscious act which I have referred to as a brilliance of the unconscious mind (page 23).

In some cases, if he is lucky, the composer will have been asked to write a specific work. When that happens (speaking for myself) a train of thought is started in his brain. Again speaking for myself, once the request has been presented, the process of musical thought matures, for the most part unconsciously, even in sleep: it not infrequently has happened to me that either at the outset or during the composition of a work my brain has felt dried up. But on waking from sleep of a sudden it starts working. Underground, unknown and incalculable things have been at work to start or re-start the process. In such case, speaking of the initial conception of a work, in some mysterious way the material or subject-matter which either bursts suddenly or gradually emerges into consciousness is found to be suitable for the purpose in hand. Sometimes the material appears ready-made; sometimes it needs moulding, hammering and reshaping to the composer's satisfaction.

Just as you can frame an epigram, write a rhymed couplet, a quatrain, a sonnet, a double ballad royal, an essay, a treatise or a novel, so in music can you employ a variety of forms. Or you may invent one.

After a simple musical remark, corresponding to a statement of fact, comes what is known as Binary Form, which may be represented as A-B. This consists of an initial

statement (A) and a collateral statement (B), usually closely associated in idea-content. This Binary Form was frequently used in the various movements of a Suite, such as Bach (1685-1750) and Purcell (1658-1695) wrote. (See below: DANCE FORMS.) In these movements the second section (B) is generally founded on the inversion of A—that is, A turned upside down.

Next, we may take Ternary Form: A-B-A. This consists of an opening statement (A) in the "tonic key" (see page 41); a second, often contrasting, statement (B), generally in the "dominant key"; and a return to A, again in the tonic.

Mention should also be made of Rondo Form. The Short Rondo Form (*rondo* is Italian for "round") may be cast in the sequence A-B-A-C-A. The Extended Rondo Form may be elaborated into some such scheme as A-B-A-G-A-B-A.

No musically inclined person should have much difficulty, after a little practice, in determining the form of any single-movement piece of music. The possibilities are limited in the nature of the case to achieve adequate presentation of the idea.

**THE SONG.**—No more than a brief mention of the Song will be made here. For the most part composers have allowed the form of the poem to condition the form of the music. Hugo Wolf (1860-1903) is generally cited as an example of perfect architectural construction [7]; though in my opinion the great French song-writers such as Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) [8] and Debussy (1862-1918) [9] are in that respect his equals and musically his superiors. But in many cases composers have merely used the text as a peg to hang their musical ideas on.

**DANCE FORMS.**—There is one feature that is common to nearly all Dance Forms; and that is, that most dances are divided into first and second parts (usually of equal lengths) called Strains. The most familiar of the older dances is the Minuet [10]. But there are many more ancient ones, which survived up to a couple of hundred years ago, such as the Allemande [11] (or German Dance), the Pavane [12] (which seems to have been of Italian or Spanish origin, the name possibly deriving from the Latin *pavō*, peacock, from the spreading of the dancers' cloaks, unless, as some authorities state, it derived from Padua in Italy) and the Galliard [12] (a gay dance following the stately Pavane, of which Praetorius

(1571-1621), quoted in *Grove's Dictionary*, says, "it is an invention of the devil, full of shameful and obscene gestures and immodest movements"). All of these dances are constructed of multiples of four or eight divisions, these four- or eight-bar periods following the steps of the dances, just as do our modern ballroom dances of to-day. Some dances, however, which began as pure folk dances, were later appropriated by the ruling class of the day. The music became highly stylised until in many cases only the frame and peculiar structure survived to indicate that the Pavan, for example, or the Passacaglia was originally music to be danced to.

The Passacaglia [13] in particular is of interest in this connection. Of uncertain origin, it was purely a peasant dance. The name appears to be derived from the Spanish *paso*, a step, and *calle*, a street. It was probably a running dance. Its musical peculiarity lies in the fact that one tune persists throughout, being played first on one instrument and then on another, while the remaining instruments weave an embroidery around it. In later days this individual feature has been preserved, although the dance character has disappeared. The Passacaglia is the most difficult musical form to employ, and has attracted many composers, who find the unity of design imparted by the reiterated subject a fascinating vehicle for their ideas.

**THE CANON.**—Another example of a purely formal movement is the Canon, Round or Catch. This consists of a single tune sung or played by one voice, which is presently joined by a second voice singing or playing the same tune, maybe a fourth lower or a fifth higher. A third voice may then enter after the same number of bars' "start" has been allowed for the first; and so on up to any number of parts that the skill of the composer may contrive. The famous Canon known as *Sumer Is Icumen In* [14], supposed by some scholars to be the work of the monk John Fornsete (d. 1239), is a superb example.

**THE FUGUE.**—The full title of this type of movement is *Fuga per Canonem*—Fugue according to Rule. The Fugue is another purely contrapuntal structure, consisting of two or more strands of independent yet interdependent melodic lines. The most usual number of parts, or "voices," is four; but five-, six- and even eight-part fugues are not uncommon. To explain what a fugue is without using musical examples is rather like describing a spiral staircase without gestures or

drawings. And one runs the additional risk of making it appear a cut-and-dried affair; which, in the hands of a musician of genius, it most certainly is not. However, let me see whether I can make myself understood, taking a simple four-part fugue as an illustration. The first "voice," not necessarily the top or treble, announces the Subject. Immediately the second voice enters with the same Subject (usually a fifth above or a fourth below), while the first voice continues with a subsidiary melodic line. The third and fourth voices then enter in turn similarly. This Exposition is then generally extended by the different voices, not necessarily in the original order of 1, 2, 3, 4, but perhaps 2, 1, 4, 3, reannouncing the Subject from time to time. Then there may be an Episode, perhaps based on a characteristic fragment of the Subject, leading to the Development, when the various voices chime in with the Subject, running through different keys, each entry following closer and closer upon the heels of the other in what is known as a Stretto, or drawing-together. Finally, in many orthodox fugues, comes the Organ Point. This is a long note (usually the Dominant) held in the bass, while the other parts play or sing the Subject in the closest possible Stretto. Often in this final Stretto the parts enter only one beat or one note behind each other. The climax is the close of the Fugue.

The Fugue just described is only one orthodox specimen of many possible varieties. But all simple fugues fall broadly into this general framework, with the frequent addition of a Counter-Subject, which is so contrived that it fits equally well when played above or below the Subject, and appears almost at every entry of the Subject, it not infrequently being itself developed episodically.

I append here a schematic outline of the three-part Fugue in E flat minor from the First Book of Bach's "Well-Tempered Clavichord" [15]. This is not to be taken as a detailed analysis. Its purpose is to demonstrate as clearly as I can the architectonic structure of a Fugue, so that the reader can see for himself the inherent symmetry of the form.

In this Fugue it will be noticed that a device common in contrapuntal writing is employed: the Subject is turned upside down, inverted, as we say, half-way through (indicated below by the word *inversus*) with a subsequent return to the original form (*rectus*). In addition, the Subject is played twice as slowly, the rest of the music continuing at the same speed.

## Structural Outline of the Fugue in E $\flat$ minor, Book I of the Well-Tempered Clavichord by Johann Sebastian Bach

Frigg as Aoi

**STRETTO 4: STRETTO 5: STRETTO 6: STRETTO 7:**

STRETTO 10.		STRETTO 9.		STRETTO 8.		STRETTO 7.	
I	Inversus	variant rectas	semi-augmentation	Inversus	variant	augmentation	normal
II	Inversus	variant rectas	variant	Inversus	variant	augmentation	normal
III	Inversus	variant rectas	variant	Inversus	variant	semi-augmentation	OOD

STRETTO 8

ESTEMA 10.

Assignment 2

HOMMAGE

20

semi-

DOD Implementation

104

10

10

10

as before, of course. This is called Augmentation. In some fugues the opposite device of Diminution is employed. In complex fugues the Subject is augmented and diminished simultaneously.

I have purposely not indicated the various keys through which the Fugue modulates; for I have no wish to bring in complications unnecessary for anyone other than the technical student.

The blank spaces are episodic passages, all of them built on characteristic phrases of the Subject. There are ten Stretti.

A little examination of this schematisation will show that the Fugue falls into three distinct sections. First, the Exposition and Development of the Subject. This brings us to the end of Stretto 3. Then come the Exposition and Development of the Inversion up to Stretto 5. A return to the *rectus*, or original form of the Subject, introduces by way of a semi-augmentation in the First Voice (Stretto 7) the Full Augmentation in the Third Voice (Stretti 8 to 10). The Fugue then closes with a Coda, or tailpiece, also founded on characteristics of the Subject. There is no Organ Point.

It might be mentioned that in addition to the Simple Fugue there are the Double, Triple and Quadruple Fugues. These have respectively two, three, and four subjects, all developed in turn and ultimately combined simultaneously with one another.

It might with advantage be remarked here that although the Fugue is such a highly artificial and elaborate contrapuntal structure, the very qualities of architecture inherent in it make a strong emotional appeal to the listener.

THE SUITE.—Between the end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries the Suite was one of the most popular of forms for keyboard music. It consisted essentially of a suite or set of dances, derived from all countries, such as the ones cited above. They were so arranged in contrast to and sympathy with one another as to constitute the first cyclic art-form in music. Purcell (1658-1695) [16], Bach (1685-1750) and Händel (1685-1759) were notable and prolific composers in this form. With the Suite we have for the first time a work conceived of as consisting of several related movements, if we except the Church Masses, which, of course, always followed the Roman Catholic ritual.

THE SONATA.—For all its latter-day modifications, the

or the achievement of unity of design on a large scale. The idea of the Sonata may be said to be latent in the Suite.

In this connection it may be mentioned that the word "sonata" means "something to be played," as opposed to "cantata," which is "something to be sung." Originally there were two kinds of sonata: the *sonata da camera* ("something to be played in a room"); and the *sonata da chiesa* ("something to be played in a church"). The *sonata da camera* developed into the Suite; the *sonata da chiesa* became the classical Sonata with which we are at present dealing.

Uncertain though the chronology of many of Bach's works is, it is probable, judging from the mature style of his Sonatas, that they belong to a late period of his life. Bach's keyboard Sonatas are three-movement works: moderately quick, slow, very quick [17]. Haydn (1732-1809) developed the Sonata further [18]; his successor Mozart (1756-1791) further still [19]. The apex came with the Sonatas of the middle and later period of Beethoven (1770-1827) [20]. His piano Sonatas are mostly four-movement works: Allegro, Adagio, Minuet (trio), Finale (allegro or presto). The first movement of the Sonata is the idiosyncratic one associated with the term Sonata Form, or First-Movement Form. In essence this falls into four sections: Exposition, Development, Recapitulation and Coda. (*Coda* is the Italian for "tail.") Stated in full this becomes:

- (i) Exposition:      (1) First section in tonic key.  
                          (2) Transition, leading to  
                          (3) Third section in contrasted key.  
                          (4) Repetition of all, or part, of the  
                          First section.

(ii) Development.

(iii) Recapitulation of (1), (2) and (3) in tonic key.

(iv) Coda.

The second movement is generally slow (in contrast to the general Allegro of the first movement) and may be cast in Ternary Form, Rondo Form, Theme and Variations, or even First-Movement Form.

In the case of a three-movement Sonata, the Finale is generally a Minuet or Scherzo (Italian for "joke"). This last is usually a Rondo.

There can be many variations and elaborations. But I feel that this outline is sufficient to demonstrate the perfection of symmetry which was evolved in this form.

THE SYMPHONY [21].—The same form developed by Haydn is used for the Symphony, which is really no more than a Sonata for orchestra. But owing to the greater variety of "tone-colour" possible on an orchestra than on a keyboard instrument, Symphonies are generally considerably longer and altogether bigger works. It is true that such works lasting, maybe, for an hour, generally drive me out of the concert hall—so, you see, you are not alone. Nevertheless, it seems that there are some individuals hardy enough to withstand a protracted emotional onslaught such as this.

My objections are, firstly, that the emotion is not sustained: I have yet to hear a work of such length in which there are not dull pages; and secondly, that I am like a sponge, which can soak up only so much and no more. When saturation-point is reached, I can no longer listen, and fly incontinent out of hearing.

THE STRING QUARTET.—Once again Haydn, mentioned above in connection with the Sonata and the Symphony, is credited with the application of this same Sonata Form to the String Quartet, which before his day made only rare appearances more in the form of the Suite than anything else. Since this is not a text-book, I do not propose to go into the matter any further.

\* \* \*

We have now discussed the Physical Basis of Music. We have examined in some detail, albeit insufficiently as yet, the workings of the composer's brain. And in this present section I have tried to demonstrate the necessity for Musical Forms, and have put before you some specimens of such forms which are, or have been, in common use. It is understood that in all the foregoing I have made no attempt to be exhaustive. I cannot remind you too often that the intention of this book is to stimulate and arouse interest in the music you constantly hear, and thereby assist in a greater appreciation, that is, understanding, of all music.

We must now turn to the next step in composition: How does the composer write down his ideas?

We have examined the raw materials of music with which the composer works, and I have tried to give some picture of the artist and his mental processes. He has at his disposal twelve equally spaced notes to an octave. A piano has a range of seven-and-a-quarter octaves, this range extending to the utmost limits of musically effective tones. How, then, does a composer realise his intentions?

The first answer to this question is that, unfortunately for him, he very seldom does. He is not like the writer, who needs but pen and paper and a command of language for everyone in the world who takes the trouble to be able to read for themselves more or less what he means. Nor is the composer like the painter, who, though admittedly often misunderstood, has but to frame his picture, hang it on a wall, and induce people to come and look at it. Between the conception of a musical idea in the composer's brain and its realisation lie several steps, every one in itself unreliable and inadequate.

There is, firstly, the question of notation. The basis of our present system of indicating the exact intervals between the notes by means of a system of lines and spaces was laid down by Guido d'Arezzo (c. 990-c. 1050), who appears to have been a monk at the Benedictine monastery of St Maur des Fosses. Prior to his time various attempts at musical notation had been made, for the most part using letters of the alphabet or numerals, and subsequently a series of signs known as neumes (Greek *neuma*, *nein*, a nod or sign). But it would be out of place here to make an excursion into the realms of the specialist by even outlining the history of the development of notation. The interested reader is referred to the excellent article on Notation by Abdy Williams in *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Macmillan, 1920).

Musical notation as we know it to-day has been in existence for only four or five hundred years. And although several alternative systems have been devised since, the practical difficulties of changing over from established practice with the enormous bulk of printed music now in existence are alone a sufficient deterrent. Complicated though our present system is, it still has numerous deficiencies. There is no absolute standard of speed. A funeral march may be written in notes of identical "value," that is, of the same apparent

ment the written notes with verbal directions, such as Quick, Slow, Moderate—or their equivalent in some other language. Maelzel, who made an ear-trumpet for his friend Beethoven when he became deaf, invented an instrument called a metronome. This instrument has a graduated pendulum with a bob which can be moved up and down to vary the speed of the stroke. At each stroke it ticks like a clock. The composer may write music with three beats to a bar, and direct that the metronome is to be set so that there are to be 52 or 120 beats to the minute. But unfortunately music—apart from ballroom dance-music—is not so rigid; and the performer quickly finds that he is obviously outraging the composer's intentions if he attempts to keep strictly to this pulse. Apart from that, metronomes vary, so that the one the composer sets his tempo by may not tally at all with the one the performer uses.

Again, although the different shapes of written notes represent their relative duration in time, there is no provision for any time-values other than the second, third and fourth powers of two and, in a few instances, of multiples of three. Without expressly writing a little 5, 6 or 7, or what you will, under a group of notes, there is no means of dividing a beat into groups other than 2, 4, 8, 16 or 32.

To add to these difficulties, every "black note" on the piano has to be written in terms of one of its adjacent "white notes" raised or lowered half a degree, or semitone, by means of one of two symbols called sharps and flats respectively. This is particularly absurd. The reasons for this anomaly are as follows. In Europe the Octave is divided into twelve equal parts, or semitones. Hindu music divides the octave into 5, 6 or 7 parts, but varies the degree of pitch so that 60 or more divisions may be catalogued. The Japanese divide the octave into twelve semitones arrived at by tuning upwards in fifths. The Arabs make use of quarter-tones.\* All these scales are artificial; but all of them are

\* Alois Haba (b. 1893) has interested himself in quarter-, sixth- and even twelfth-tone music. These microtones, as they are called, fall on the unaccustomed ear with varying effects, depending on the sensitivity or tolerance of the individual listener. At an International Congress of Musicians held in London in 1938 I was one of those privileged to hear a demonstration of a specially tuned harmonium. This instrument was to all appearances normal. But its entire compass covered only the range of

note of the scale (called the Tonic), the Octave, and the fifth above the fundamental, or Dominant.

Scientifically speaking there is a true "natural scale" based on acoustic principles. This natural scale arises out of what is known as the Harmonic Series. Every note is accompanied by tones of higher pitch called Partialis. They are not clearly audible on some instruments, such as the tuning-fork and the wide-stopped organ pipe. But the human voice and the piano, for example, are particularly rich in them. That is to say that a sound produced on either of these instruments does not consist of only a single note but of the Harmonic Series associated with it. When you strike, say, bottom G on the piano, you can, if the piano is perfectly in tune, presently hear its Harmonic Series as well.

Ex. 1



In practice you can seldom detect any partials above No. 8, the intensity of sound diminishing progressively. The bottom G is produced by the vibration of the whole string. The G above is produced by the vibrations of the two halves, the D above by the vibrations of the three thirds, etc.

If you use this fundamental G (for example) as the starting-point of your scale, the next note you can fix is the D which, when sounded, produces its complement of harmonics. From this series you can fix the fifth above D, which is A. Repeating the process, you can get a complete a Perfect Fourth—from C to F above. When Dr. Sandberg, the inventor, played on this remarkable instrument, I for one found that the interval that produced the greatest sensation of physical pain was the Third of a Tone. It was curious to observe that no one in the audience was able to tell which of any two adjacent microtones was the higher in pitch. Interesting, therefore, as such experiments are—for what experiments are not interesting?—it is difficult to hold out any hope of a widespread popularity for such music. It seems likely to remain a scientific curiosity.

gone very far, you will find that you have arrived at, say, E as the fifth above A, and will discover that this E is not quite the same note as the E derived from C. The one will be slightly sharper in pitch than the other. Similarly with the other notes of the scale: there are more than one version of each. Moreover, the intervals between adjacent notes are not equal. The untrained human voice always distinguishes F sharp in, say, the scale of D major from G flat in the scale of E flat minor, although on the piano the two notes are identical. String players tend to differentiate similarly.

If practice, therefore, each fifth is tuned slightly flat, otherwise the last note of the series, instead of being in unison with the fundamental, would be slightly sharp.

The foregoing is necessarily technical and elaborate. I have tried to put the bare essentials as concisely as possible. But the essential point to realise is that in the "natural scale" the octave is divided into *unequal parts*. Various methods of tuning have been tried in the distant past. But it was not until the eighteenth century that Bach (1685-1750) popularised what is known as the Mean Temperament, in which every note is a compromise so that the twelve divisions of our octave are *equal*.

The first person to realise the full implication of this was Schönberg (b. 1874). As I shall show later in Section VII, where I trace the Genesis of Music, composers had during all that intervening time been fumbling more or less blindly towards the important realisation that the "black notes" on the piano are not in fact to be regarded as neighbours of the "white notes" raised or lowered by means of a "sharp" or "flat," as had formerly been the case, but were now separate notes in their own right, as it were. The octave is now divided into twelve *equal* parts. Therefore there is no reason why one note should take precedence over another or be regarded as an "accidental," as notes qualified by sharps and flats are called. In other words, the terms C sharp and D flat, for example, should logically be abandoned, and the note allowed a proper name of its own. If this were done, one of the chief encumbrances of notation would be cleared up.

Nevertheless, owing partly to the inertia of tradition, the legend persists that there are sharps and flats—accidentals—in our Mean Temperament scale.

on, and there is no overcoming them. Bearing in mind extremely primitive methods of denoting relative time, as was mentioned above, and the entire absence of standard of absolute time, it will be seen that the notes are at best only an approximation to the user's intentions, no matter how fully they are supplied by verbal directions.

next obstacle is the performer. He has to distil from inadequate symbols what musical sense he can. The as everyone knows, varies sadly in direct relationship musical insight and general interpretative skill of the ner. When there are several performers, as in the chamber music and orchestras, the number of things in go wrong in a performance is terrifying. The hing thing is not that the generality of performances ad, but that it is so good.

### (iii) THE INSTRUMENTS

ng, I hope, travelled with me thus far on the arduous nation of musical territory, the next thing is to examine ruments for which music is written. Up to now we ached the point of putting it down on paper. But e we writing for? There is a score of instruments se from. What are they?

are four main kinds of instruments: wind (wood ss), percussion, strings. These are subdivided into :

**Four wood-wind:** flutes  
oboes  
clarinets  
bassoons

**Four brass:** French horns  
trumpets  
trombones  
tubas

**Four strings:** violins  
violas  
violoncellos  
double-basses

the percussion we will leave for separate consideration. I want to pause here to consider the incidence of these fourfold divisions. I remarked earlier on the four natural divisions of the human voice into soprano, alto, tenor, bass. It will be seen that the instruments of the orchestra follow this fourfold division very closely.

There is a further application of this principle which I also well mention here, although it is not strictly in its place. I mean the facts that we have four fingers; that there are twelve divisions of the octave; eight notes in our major and minor modes. This is significant because, prior to Bach's time (1685-1750), it was customary to play keyboard instruments such as the organ with only the four fingers of each hand, the thumb not being used at all. Having regard to the fourfold divisions mentioned above, when keyboard instruments such as the virginals and the organ were invented, the fact that men had only four fingers merely made them symmetrical.

Before we consider the instruments of the orchestra in detail, a history of the orchestra itself will not be out of place.

#### (a) *General History of the Orchestra*

The orchestra as we know it to-day is a very recent development in the history of the youngest of the three arts, music.

Surprisingly enough, the word "orchestra" comes from Greek, meaning literally "a dancing-place." This referred to the arrangement of the Greek theatre in ancient days, when the dances were performed between the stage on which the dramatic representation took place and the space reserved for the chorus, in front of which sat the audience. Nobody seems to know exactly what Greek music of these times sounded like, although several large books have been written about the subject. But these speculations need not concern us here.

Let us make a skip of many hundreds of years to A.D. 1600, when we hear for the first time something authentic about an orchestra that was anything more than a "consort" of instruments.

It was a little band of five instrumentalists, consisting of da-gamba—the precursor (not ancestor) of the modern

—a harpsichord, a double guitar and two flutes. The occasion on which we hear of this “orchestra” was the performance in Rome of an Oratorio, *La Rappresentazione dell’Anima e del Corpo*, which may be translated as “The Representation of the Spirit and the Body,” by Emilio Cavalieri.

Eight years later a landmark in musical history, familiar to all music students, was written: Monteverde’s opera *Orfeo* [22], which had as orchestra two harpsichords, two violini piccoli—a kind of small violin now obsolete—two large guitars, two bass viols, ten tenor viols, one double harp, two organs of wood, two viole-da-gamba, four trombones, one regal—a small organ which survives only as a stop on the organs of to-day—two cornets, one little octave flute, one clarion and three trumpets with mutes. This all sounds very imposing. Thirty-five players! Why, modern chamber orchestras have no more.

Before 1650 the elements of the orchestra of to-day were established. There was a definite division into the four component parts of strings, wood-wind, brass and percussion. Such an orchestra was always written for by Purcell (1658–1695). Mozart (1736–1791) brought fresh innovations to be detailed later; Beethoven (1770–1827) still more, until we come to Berlioz (1834–1867) and finally Wagner (1835–1885), who both wrote for mammoth orchestras the like of which in size and complexity of the kind of music had never before been thought of.

Since then these achievements in sheer size have been surpassed, if we except the fantastic Berlioz, of whom the following anecdote is told. The King of Prussia, with whom Berlioz was having an audience, remarked, “I understand that you are the composer who writes for five hundred musicians.” “Your Majesty has been misinformed,” answered Berlioz. “I sometimes write for four hundred and fifty.” And indeed he states in his book on orchestration that the ideal orchestra should consist of 242 strings, four of which are tuned an octave below the double-basses (!), 30 grand pianos, 30 harps and enormous numbers of wind and percussion players.

Such requirements are plainly impracticable; although when I was living in Berlin there was a performance of Mahler’s (1860–1911) Eighth Symphony in which one thousand people took part. After all, the audience must sit somewhere, if they

can bear it; besides which there is the delicate question of finance. Orchestral players are highly paid; and very properly, too. An ordinary symphony concert of to-day may, with two rehearsals, cost as much as three hundred guineas or more. If this seems a lot of money to some people, let them remember that good orchestral players are rare, and concerts rarer still, when it comes to making a living at the game.

Speaking of strictly contemporary times, the money question rules the hour absolutely. It is already a considerable undertaking to collect an orchestra of a hundred and twenty or so for Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* [23], which is one of the largest scores of modern times. For whereas the dimensions of a Berlioz orchestra were due mainly to "doubling," that is, having more than one of a single kind of instrument, in Stravinsky's work it is actually the number of different kinds of instruments which make the orchestra necessarily large.

We see, then, that during its three hundred years of existence the orchestra has grown from a primitive group of half a dozen indifferent, even bad, players, to a perfect unity of organisation embodying from fifty to one hundred highly trained artists.

Let me go back a moment to insist again that there are few things in the history of music more striking than the enormous influence which the human voice has exercised over its every form. For the most part, when writing music for accompanying voices, which was nearly always the function of early orchestras, composers were content to let the instruments play in unison with the singers. It is therefore not too much to say that the nature and limitations of the human voice have actually conditioned the other forms of music down to within very recent times.

Additional limitations to the kind of music written for instruments were the imperfect methods of manufacture and the lack of skill of the performers. For some time, for example, organs were made with keys up to six inches wide. These were struck with the whole fist, one note to each hand. A slow business.\*

\* The organ cannot properly be regarded as an orchestral instrument. Yet I am unwilling to omit mention of it; if only because in the past its functions and influence have been considerable. Therefore, without embarking on a discussion of the

The earliest of the present-day instruments to attain perfection was the Trombone, in those days called the Sackbut (probably Old French *saquier-bucher*, to pull—to push), which was evolved from the trumpet in 1300 and has not altered its structure since the end of that century.

The second instrument to be perfected was the Violin, which achieved its zenith in Italy, where so many good things in music have come from, as early as three centuries ago, since when it has not been improved.

The latest instruments to be perfected are the French Horn and the Trumpet, both brass instruments, fitted with an arrangement of valves for producing their notes. It is the device of the valves which is the modern feature, introduced during the last century.

For some reason unknown to me, the backbone of the orchestra has always been the string section. The wind instruments as a rule have been used mainly to provide different tone colours in various combinations, but nearly always with the strings in the background. I see no reason

instrument itself, I will remark on the effects which it has had on, at any rate, two listeners. The following story is taken from a book with the charming title, *The Music of Nature; or, an Attempt to Prove that What is Pleasing and Passionate in the Art of Singing, Speaking and Performing upon Musical Instruments, is derived from the Sounds of The Animated World. With Curious and Interesting Illustrations*, by William Gardiner (1832):

"The writer, on Whitsunday, 1824, was in the organ-loft at Westminster Abbey, when the king and queen of Owhyee, Sandwich Isles, were introduced by the Dean, and placed near himself in the choir. The king, a vulgar-looking man, perfectly black, dressed in a black coat, white waistcoat, and pea-green gloves, which were not long enough to conceal his sooty wrists, stood up the whole time of the service gazing with amazement at the roof. The queen, a tall, fine masculine figure, was so struck upon the first burst of the organ, as to be thrown into extreme agitation, so much so, that she would have leaped out of the stall in which she was placed, had not her maid of honour (an English lady) prevented her by laying hands upon her. Every time the organ recommenced with its full volume of sound, this frenzy returned, and caused much confusion. During the sermon she settled down into something like composure, and at the conclusion was led out by the Dean and other dignitaries, to view the edifice. Habited in a fashionable morning dress, her majesty was only distinguishable from her attendants by her gaunt and gigantic figure, and the sudden ejaculations of surprise, which she was constantly making. The king, however, lost in mute attention, never lowered his eyes from the roof, but kept staggering about the church till he made his exit at the door."

why it has always been the tradition, and is still the rule, to have an orchestra consisting of, say, twenty-four violins divided into two "choirs," ten violas, eight violoncellos and six double-basses, while for the most part the wind instruments are represented singly or in pairs. It is a quality and balance of sound that somehow has become fixed in composers' minds. True, in Händel's day it was common enough to have as many as eight oboes all playing in unison. What it can have sounded like is inconceivable to modern ears. For the Oboe, of all instruments, is the most penetrating in tone. Suffice it that the convention of the predominance of the String Section has existed, and still exists, except for here and there a work like the Chamber Symphony of Schönberg (*b.* 1874) which is written for fifteen solo instruments.

And now a word as to the composition of the modern orchestra, which may be of three sizes: a full symphony orchestra, a small orchestra or a chamber orchestra. Beginning with the last, which is only the first pared down to its essentials, it is usual to have a small body of strings which preserve in themselves the tradition of the four natural divisions of the human voice into soprano, alto, tenor, bass, by having two sets of violins ("firsts" and "seconds"), violas and violoncellos, which last are usually reinforced by one or two double-basses playing an octave lower with them.

The number of strings in a chamber orchestra is always small: perhaps six first violins, four or five second violins, four violas, three or four 'cellos, one or two basses. In the wood-wind department it is customary to have one flute, one oboe, one clarinet, one bassoon; and in the brass, one French horn—two if you are lucky—one trumpet and one trombone, which last is invariably a tenor, trombones being made in two sizes, tenor and bass: a total of about thirty players. The essential feature of a chamber orchestra is that the instruments are treated as solo instruments; that is, as individuals; in contrast to the corporate unity of a large orchestra.

A small orchestra may have ten to twelve first violins, eight seconds, four violas, four 'cellos, and two or three basses; two flutes; one, possibly two, oboes; two clarinets; two bassoons; four French horns, two trumpets, three trombones (two tenors and a bass), with perhaps a Bass Tuba—the first mention we have made of this roaring giant of the orchestra,

of which I shall have to reserve further mention until we treat of it separately. In addition, there may be a small "battery" of percussion instruments played by one or two artists—about fifty players in all.

Lastly, a full symphony orchestra, such as one gets at the B.B.C. Symphony Concerts, will have as many as thirty-six violins (twenty firsts, sixteen seconds); fourteen violas; twelve 'cellos; and ten basses; two or three flutes—which are made in three sizes: the ordinary flute, or *flauto grosso*, a tiny one, the *flauto piccolo*, and, rarely, a bass flute; two oboes; and a larger instrument of the same family called the English Horn or *cor anglais*; two ordinary clarinets, with perhaps a small one (E flat clarinet); one bass clarinet; two bassoons; one or two double bassoons; four, six or even eight French horns; two or three trumpets; three or four trombones; two tubas (a tenor and a bass); a full battery of percussion of various kinds, which may include three different drums as well as the kettle-drums or *timpani*, and cymbals, gongs, bells, etc.; one or two harps; and even a piano. That is, about a hundred players.

I cannot say who it was who set the pattern on which all orchestral scores are laid out. Certainly Bach arranged the instruments on his score just as we do to-day: that is, the orchestra is divided into its four families of wood-wind, brass, percussion and strings. Every score follows this arrangement, with the wood-wind at the top.\* Furthermore, the detailed subdivision of the instruments is also stereotyped into four-part choirs, of which mention has been previously made.

I would like to insist for the last time on the fourfold division of all the groups of instruments on the vocal pattern. In the wood-wind the sopranos are represented by the flutes and oboes, the altos lumped together with the tenors being the English horn, clarinets and bassoons, the basses being also bassoons (these have a dual rôle) and double bassoons. In the brass, the trumpets are the sopranos; the horns, roughly speaking, the altos; the tenor trombones the tenors; and bass trombones and tubas the basses.

In conclusion, it will be seen that the composer must have a pretty extensive knowledge of all the elements which he has

\* One exception is the MS. score of Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*, which is in the National Bibliothek, Vienna. Here Schubert places the Violins at the top of the score.

to cope with. He must be able to hear "in his head" the exact tone quality of each instrument in all its registers—for the flute, for example, is weak on its four bottom notes (from Middle C upwards); the bassoon has a quite different quality in its top register from that in its bottom; the kind of trumpet in ordinary use in this country is agile and brilliant in its top notes, but poor and "slow to speak" below Middle C (its compass extends to the F sharp or E below); and so on. When orchestrating the composer has before him an almost limitless array of possibilities.

Naturally there exists a good deal of convention about "scoring," as orchestration is commonly called. I say naturally, because the composer is limited in his choice in so far as every instrument has its individual compass, or range, to the extremes of which it is generally for the player's sake inadvisable to go, and beyond which it is of course impossible. But in those many cases where the compasses of several instruments overlap, that is, round about the middle of the piano, the choice of mixing his colours is large.

But we seem to be getting into the realms of the specialist. We had better quit them immediately and go on to consider the orchestra in detail.

For convenience' sake, then, let us begin at the top of the score and work our way down, hoping to reach the bottom without stumbling too badly into the many pitfalls which beset the path of one who sets out to explain things to his fellows. For I am not omniscient, and can only try to set down what I know.

#### (b) *The Flute*

This instrument cannot be traced in any form more than roughly resembling the modern Transverse Flute, to give it its full title, for more than four centuries. Antique flutes have been dug up in Egypt and Greece. But beyond the fact that they were wooden pipes with finger-holes there is no resemblance to the orchestral instrument of to-day, which owes its perfection to Theobald Boehm, who lived in the last century. Earlier types of flutes were blown in the manner of the penny whistle, whereas the contemporary instrument has a hole cut near one end as a mouthpiece and is held horizontally, whence its title of *Flauto traverso*.

There is no more confusing instrument in the orchestra than the flute. Certain of its bottom notes—its lowest is

Middle C, its highest, for practical purposes, the C three octaves above—resemble the quality of a trumpet so closely as to deceive even trained ears for a moment. Perhaps Debussy (1862–1918) knew more about the flute's possibilities than any other composer. His delicious *L'Aprés-Midi d'un Faune* [24] is a model of flute writing, exploiting its different qualities to perfection.

All of these points have to be borne in mind by the composer. He may, at a given moment, let the flute play a theme by itself. It may play in unison with the violins, or an octave above them. It may also be combined with any one, or several, of the other wind instruments. It may reinforce one of the horns. And each effect is different in sound.

Its conventional use is to give brilliance to the upper strings by playing with them, as long as the melodic line is smooth. Arpeggios, which are configurations based on blocks of notes (chords), although equally suited to it, give a quite different effect. Ravel (1875–1937) is very fond of this device, usually writing for two or three flutes running parallel with each other, such as, for example, beginning on the common chord of C major (C, E, G) and running up or down step by step. For an example of this style of writing the reader is referred to Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloe* [25].

There are also two other kinds of flute, as was mentioned above: the Piccolo (Italian meaning "small") and the Bass Flute.

The Piccolo, not so popular as its parent with poets, who love to rhyme it with Lute, is the most dangerous member of the orchestra. A modern writer has said that its lowest notes sound like a ghost with a pip in its throat. Throughout most of its register, however, its tone can be so piercing that the greatest discretion is needed in using it. At a moment of climax it adds an amazing brilliance to the score. Composers of a humorous turn of mind have occasionally made comic effects by writing duets for the Piccolo and Bassoon, the two instruments playing three or four octaves apart.

The Bass Flute is hardly ever met with. Only two examples come to mind. Appropriately enough the one is exemplary, the other a perfect specimen of what not to do. The latter is in *The Planets* [26], an orchestral suite by Gustav Holst (1874–1934). In this work the composer employs a mammoth orchestra of over a hundred, not counting a female choir, which makes a brief appearance for forty bars at the end of

the last movement—a monument of extravagance. The fourth flute plays also the Bass Flute. There is at least that economy, it being customary for the player to change from one instrument to the other where necessary—a simple business, the fingering and general technique being identical for all flutes. The folly of the Bass Flute in this instance is that, although used, it might just as well not be. It has exactly five bars of "solo work" right at the end of the last movement. In other places where it is used in this work one of the clarinets could just as well take its part and no material difference be apparent. Indeed, the composer has realised this, for he has written in the score a footnote to the effect that in the absence of a Bass Flute one of the clarinets can take its part. The other example, which shows off the beautiful, indeed unique, "sleepy" quality of the instrument is in the Action Rituel des Ancêtres section of *The Rite of Spring* [23] by Stravinsky (b. 1882). Here it introduces, and subsequently accompanies, a theme played in octaves on two muted Trumpets and a Bass Trumpet—another rarity. In this case, although the clarinet *could* play the Bass Flute part, the effect would be entirely different. Its use is justified.

#### (c) *The Oboe*

We now come to the second instrument on the orchestral score—the Oboe; the most important solo melodic instrument in the orchestra, with a timbre that tends to be piercing, of biting reedy quality, capable of great sweetness in the hands of an expert player who, under the guidance of the conductor, must always be attentive to what is going on around him so that his tone shall blend as much as possible or shall stand out above the other instruments according to the demands of the moment. A single note misplaced by the composer can more easily upset the balance of the orchestra than almost any other instrument. It must therefore be used as well as played with the greatest discretion; and if only "single wood-wind"—that is, one of each—is used in a smallish orchestra, so that its use is unavoidable for the sake of "filling in," it must be so placed that, although it may not be intended to predominate, it will do the least harm if it does, as it will, stand out slightly more than the surrounding flute, clarinet and bassoon.

Its name may well be a puzzle to some people, pronounced, as it is in English, as if it had only two syllables, whereas the

Germans and Italians, using the same word, accord it three. We get a glimpse of sense in the word, however, when we turn to the French Hautbois, or old English Hautboy—"high wood," to distinguish it from the obsolete Gros Bois, "big wood." For it has the distinction of being one of the two surviving members of a large family which, in a rudimentary form, has existed since prehistoric times. In these early examples of the instrument's forbears the essential feature of a double reed is always preserved: that is, the mouthpiece of the instrument consists of two thin reeds bound together. These are inserted into the player's mouth and are set in vibration against each other, giving the instrument its distinctive tone. This is a distinguishing feature which it shares with the Bassoon, as opposed to the Clarinet, which has only a single beating reed, held against the tip of the pipe by ligatures.

The other survivor of the ancient family of Shalmeys, as they were called, is the English Horn, or Cor Anglais, which is no more than a distant cousin. But of this, more presently.\*

The Oboe labours under the disadvantage of having the second smallest compass of any instrument now in use, the smallest being the English Horn. Its bottom note is the B flat below Middle C; its highest, the G two octaves above—a total range of two octaves and a sixth. It is also the most complicated of the wood-winds, having a formidable array of keys and finger-holes. Nevertheless, it is capable of great agility and "high-speed" work, which can sound very brilliant when properly employed.

A good example of its use is the opening of the third movement of Tchaikovsky's (1840-1893) Fourth Symphony [108].

Since Händel's day (1685-1759) the task of giving the tuning A to the orchestra has always devolved upon the Oboe. Everyone who has arrived on time at an English concert will have heard that long note given out, immediately picked up by everyone in the orchestra to adjust their pitch to. In more musically civilised countries such preliminaries are over before the audience begins to arrive. Useless, as is sometimes done, for the orchestra to tune up behind the scenes; the temperature of the hall will undo all the work

\* For the sake of completeness there exists a Bass Oboe, but this is practically never used.

"of Conducting," Hermann Scherchen, the great German conductor, says that it always ought to be insisted on that orchestra are in their seats at least half an hour before scheduled time of the concert, so that all the instruments are properly tuned and warmed up; for the temperature of the wind instruments makes a considerable difference to the pitch. That, alas, is an ideal unlikely to be achieved long as orchestral players lead the hectic lives they usually do. It is no uncommon thing for an orchestra to rehearse for a concert in the morning, hurry off to a gramophone session in the afternoon at the other end of London, rush home, change into evening clothes afterwards, and arrive at the scene of the evening's operations as they swallow the mouthful of a snatched sandwich, after which they are supposed to be in a calm and receptive state of mind to give a finished and artistic performance, as likely as not under the conductor whose acquaintance they made for the first time couple of mornings previously at the first of the two hearings. That is why, until recently, when appraising a concert, one always inserted the proviso that in the circumstances the performance was as good as could have been expected.

To return to the Oboe: the instrument needs very little breath for producing its notes, a fact which calls for finest control of the player's lungs, on which lengthy *legato* (smooth) passages impose considerable strain. Light cetering passages, on the other hand, are easy to play effectively. Innumerable examples of this kind of writing can be found in the opera *Hänsel and Gretel* [27] by Hummel (1854-1921), or in almost any work of Tchaikovsky (1840-1893).

We see, then, that although so severely limited in compass, the range of style suitable is wide: it can be tender, joking, sad or gay.

Despite the fact that its tone is so penetrating—not least at the first Händel Commemoration Concerts in this country—twenty-six Oboes played in an orchestra against about fifteen violins. Since the Oboes of those days had heavier reeds than those employed now, in consequence of which they must have been even more piercing (and rougher), it is conceivable what it can have sounded like.

The Oboe's distant cousin, alluded to above, is something of a poor relation. The English Horn, which is neither English nor a horn, is built on lines similar to the Oboe, except for two important points, and is the Alto voice of the four double-reed instruments, thus:

Soprano	Oboe
Alto	English horn
Tenor	Bassoon
Bass	Double bassoon

The differences in construction are these: the English Horn ends in a curious wooden "bell," not unlike a ball with two sections of the perimeter cut away opposite each other, one opening fitting on to the main pipe, the other free to emit air. At the other end of the instrument there is a thin metal tube on to which a double reed is fixed. This tube is bent, which gives rise to the theory that that instrument is not a *Cor Anglais*, but a *Cor Angl  *—bent horn. However this may be, it is in no sense a horn.

The bell at the end accounts for the unique tone quality of the English Horn. It has a deep hollow sound, quite different from the Oboe, more nasal in quality and more evocative of sadness. This virtue of the instrument has been admirably exploited by Berlioz (1803–1869) in the *Carnaval Romain* [41].

The instrument is pitched one-fifth below the Oboe—that is, its lowest note is the E below Middle C, its highest the A one octave above. This brings us to the first mention of what is called a transposing instrument. The fingering is identical with that of the Oboe. But, being pitched a fifth lower, as has just been said, if the player fingers a note which on the Oboe would sound G, the sound on the English Horn is the note a fifth below—C. This may sound confusing, but it is in reality the simplest from the player's point of view. And it is, after all, the player who matters. Imagine an oboist having to learn different fingering, which he would have to do were the notation "true to pitch," when his fingering is already the most complicated of all the instruments.

In a sense the Piccolo is also a transposing instrument. The fingering of the Piccolo is identical with that of the

WHAT IS APPROPRIATE TO ONE MEMBER OF THE GROUP IS IN A GENERAL WAY APPLICABLE TO ALL. AND, indeed, I have already digressed from the instruments which I have discussed in previous sections to make passing reference to the Bassoon.

By the time we came to the Bass Clarinet the length of the instrument was already becoming a serious handicap to the player, as was shown. The Bassoon, being an instrument of eight-foot tone, would be quite unmanageable were it not so built as to bend back on itself in the form of a U, thus halving the length. Even so, an ordinary hand would have difficulty in covering some of the finger-holes were they not bored at an angle in the wood.

The early history of the Bassoon has been the victim of much confusion. In Italian it is called *Fagotto*, from its supposed resemblance to a bundle of faggots. This gave rise to the legend that it is a much older instrument than it really is, its invention being assigned to a certain cleric called Afranio, who is known to have built an instrument which he called Phagotus in the beginning of the sixteenth century. Eventually an old wood-cut of the good canon with his Phagotus was discovered, showing it to be something like a miniature organ blown by bellows.

Actually the development of the Bassoon has been a largely fortuitous business, successive makers improving by direct experiment upon earlier models. To this day it remains imperfect, many of the notes—which ones vary with the individual instrument—being indifferent in quality and shaky in intonation unless the player is skilful enough to correct the defects with his lips and by reinforcing with extra keys. Consequently the Bassoon player has to be on the watch as regards intonation in much the same way as a string player.

Many text-books advise the student to eschew the lowest notes as being poor in quality. I have never found this to be the case myself—and I used to play the Bassoon. Indeed, its bottom note, the B flat two octaves below Middle C, is peculiarly rich and full. Its top note, theoretically the F one octave above Middle C, has a curious tight, reedy quality. For practical purposes the top three semitones are ruled out. Whoever has heard Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* [23] will have noticed what nervous work the opening phrase is, beginning with a Bassoon solo on top C. It is seldom that this phrase "comes off" without a flaw.

above humour. It is always at home in staccato jumping passages such as Tchaikovsky loved. In its upper register it blends perfectly with the French Horn; in its lower, when played staccato, it goes very well with the Trombone.

The Double Bassoon is still generally regarded as an "extra" in most orchestras. This is a great pity; for the bass of the orchestra is its weakest part; and in default of a Double Bassoon the composer is often driven to scoring in the conventional and eventually monotonous way of having the 'Cellos and Double-basses in octaves throughout. This again is largely an economic difficulty. One way out of it is to make the Second Bassoon player alternate with the Double Bassoon. But this is at best a makeshift.

This concludes the wood-wind group. Next we shall attack the Brass.

#### (g) *The French Horn*

The French Horn, known as the Horn for short, is an instrument of great beauty, most difficult to play well, and possessing triple functions; that is, it is used as a melodic instrument, for filling in harmonies as either a quiet or noisy background, and in later days has acquired some measure of pure decoration and embellishment. We shall, therefore, have a good deal to say about it. But before anything else, let us, as with the other instruments, consider its ancestors.

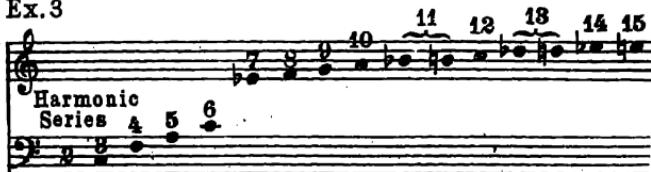
Primitive peoples have used horns made of conch shells, elephant's tusks and the like for signalling purposes. It has been, and still is, extensively used in hunting, especially in France, whence its popularity for this purpose gives it its name. It was probably introduced into the orchestra for the first time by Lully (1632-1687) as an instrument of brass winding round itself in a circle and carried, during the chase, over the shoulder. In 1711 we know from old records that it was used in the Theatre Royal at Dresden, and a little later was introduced into the Imperial Opera at Vienna. Campra, a composer now quite forgotten, wrote for it in his opera *Achille et Déidamie* in 1735; and Rameau (1683-1764) used two hunting horns in his operas. Their introduction aroused a good deal of opposition at first on the grounds of the coarse and noisy tone of the instrument. It is impossible nowadays to say how far these objections were justified; the instrument now in use is so far removed from its prototype

that the sweet sounds we associate with it may well be different from those of the old Horn as is the instrument itself.

The reader will remember that on page 41 of this book we referred to the acoustic phenomenon known as the Harmonic Series. It might be as well to turn once more this page to refresh his memory with the salient facts of the Partials which are always found in association with the Fundamental Note.

It is on this phenomenon of the Harmonic Series that the Horn is based. Thus a simple Horn of about twelve feet length is found to stand in the key of F. This means that the only notes which can be produced without artificial means—what these are will be gone into presently—will be the Harmonic Series beginning on the F one octave below Middle C, proceeding by successive steps thus:

Ex. 3



Horns of different lengths, thus standing in different keys, have similar series.

It was the player Hampl, at the Court of Dresden in 1720, who, to damp down the loud tone to which exception had been taken, as mentioned above, stuffed some wool into the bell of his Horn, and discovered that the pitch was then lowered one semitone. He thereupon experimented by inserting his hand into the bell, and found that it was possible to produce notes other than those belonging to the Harmonic Series. True, the tone quality was different by being muffled. But this accidental discovery had far-reaching results. These stopped notes, as they were called, came into regular use in passages where the instrument was not prominent.

Another invention was equally important. Music had long ago reached the point where departures from the opening key were usual. The drawback as far as the Horns were

which had started so happily in the original key. It was obviously impracticable to carry about three or four separate instruments. The device known as the Crook therefore came into existence. This is a length of tube which is detachable from the main body of the instrument and can be replaced by another either longer or shorter, thus lengthening or shortening the instrument as a whole. This was one degree better. There still remained the serious disability of having to give the player time to change his crooks; and even then, of course, the notes he could play were limited in solo passages to the Harmonic Series, such as you used to hear Lord Lonsdale's postilion blowing on days when the Coaching Club met to drive down to Ranelagh; or the rather unsatisfactory stopped notes for less important passages.

During the last century a number of manufacturers busied themselves with perfecting a system of valves which by a simple mechanism cut off or open up different lengths of the whole tube. This done the instrument was equipped with a complete chromatic compass of notes, none of which needed to be stopped with the hand.

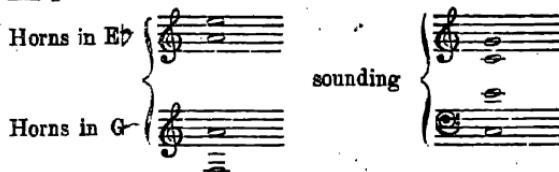
From the earliest times of the instrument's introduction into the orchestra it has been customary to have one or more pairs of them. This practice may be attributed in part to an attempt to reduce the limitations referred to above by having one Horn in F, a second in E flat, a third in B flat, a fourth in C. When they all stood in different keys it was naturally seldom that they played together. The custom of having two, four, six or even eight Horns in our orchestra has, however, persisted.

It is the invariable rule nowadays that the Horn in F is used, as being the easiest to handle. Exceptions are made when playing early music by, shall we say, Mozart (1756-1791), which of course was written for Horns in specific keys.

In one sense, then, modern scores are easier to read than older ones, in that the Horns are all in one key. For naturally the Horn is treated as a transposing instrument, for the same reasons as were mentioned above in connection with the English Horn and Clarinets. The Horn in F sounds a perfect fifth lower than its written notes, i.e. Middle C is written G above.

different key, the chord of C major might have presented improbable aspect of, say—

Ex. 4



It is curious that the very obvious device of valves alluded to did not come into being until so recently; for ancient Roman Horn called the *Tibia* was discovered in at Pompeii. From its name those with a little rudimentary knowledge of anatomy will conjecture that the Roman *Tibia* was evolved from a shin-bone, which seems in some ways an odd thing to blow into. Anyway, this Roman *Tibia* a system of valves consisting of eleven sliding sockets, number of which could be closed at will. It has been marked before that there is nothing new under the sun. However untrue that may be, it is disconcerting to find such inventions are only rediscoveries, like the steam engine upon which the nineteenth century so prided itself, appare oblivious that Hero had invented one at Alexandria about 100 B.C.

And now as to the functions of the Horn. Small orchestras always have two; large ones, four, six or eight already said. Whatever the number, they are written for pairs, the first Horn of each pair taking the upper notes, second Horn specialising in low notes. When playing so the tone is sweet and pure, in some ways akin to the cool of the Clarinet, but fuller and rounder. But it can also sound like a rout chair scraped over a parquet floor.

The classical instance of Horn writing is in *Till Eulenspiegel* [30] by Richard Strauss (b. 1864), where the Horn has opening solo, beginning at the top of its compass and descending in wild swoops to the nethermost depths. Such passages must be written with caution, however. Strauss, being

strument is capable of.

As a rule it is confined to smooth melodic passages and prolonged sustained notes. These last serve to cement the structure together when the rest of the orchestra may be executing more lively passages. In its more ferocious moments, such as the yells of the eight Horns in *The Rite of Spring* [23], that masterpiece of modern orchestration which I have quoted before and shall quote again, it can be really terrifying. It is a new aspect of the instrument which is in danger of being overdone, just as is the muted Trumpet, about which something will be said presently.

(h) *The Trumpet*

One approaches the topic of the Trumpet with a certain diffidence. Not everyone calls it his favourite instrument. Shakespeare refers to "the harsh resounding trumpet's dreadful bray" in *Richard II*. And then there is that story about Mozart, which I do not myself believe, who is alleged to have fainted at the sound. On the other hand, I know a musician (not a trumpeter) whose favourite instrument it is. And Praetorius, writing in 1640, says "Der Trunmet ist ein herrlich Instrument, wenn ein guter Meister, der es wohl und künstlich swingen, darüber kömmt."\*

Historians for the most part seem not to differentiate clearly between the Horn and Trumpet families, adducing both from the common stock of early instruments made from animals' horns. However entangled its early history may be, we at least hear of the Trumpet when "Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. And seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the Lord went on continually, and blew with the trumpets; and the armed men went before them; but the rereward came after the ark of the Lord, the priests going on, and blowing with the trumpets. And the second day they compassed the city once, and returned into the camp: so they did six days. And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests

\* "The trumpet is a beautiful instrument in the hands of a good player, who can manage it artistically."

view with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Sh  
for the Lord hath given you the city. . . . So the pe  
shouted when the priests blew with the trumpets: and it c  
to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trum  
and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall  
down flat." Joshua lived about 1200 B.C.

It is claimed that the instrument as known in China is  
even greater antiquity. The clearest differentiation betw  
the Horn and the Trumpet that we can make is this.  
Trumpet belongs to the Tuba family, the parent also of  
Trombone; whereas the Horn is descended from the Lit  
Both of these ancient instruments are met with in e  
Roman times—

Multos castra juvant, et lituo tubae  
Permixtus sonitus.

*Horace (65-68 B.C.)*

—and both are derived from other sources; the Tuba f  
the Etruscans, the Lituus from the Oscans.

It may be pointed out, in passing, that the modern Co  
is a hybrid descended from the two families. For  
reason that the Cornet is regrettably absent from Eng  
Orchestras, no more will be said about it except that it is  
instrument of four-foot tone, whereas the Trumpet is of ei  
foot tone, which difference is accountable for its le  
brilliance. This is compensated for by its increased agi  
which can rival that of the Clarinet. Its use in Fre  
orchestras is a recognised thing, and in Germany, too, :  
frequently found. That we in this country do not emp  
it cannot be too much regretted.

The Trumpet suffered, naturally, from the same disabil  
as the Horn, until it was furnished with valves in the  
century, viz. it could play only the notes of the Harmo  
Series. Like the Horns, too, the Trumpets were, and  
are, built in different keys. The one in most frequent us  
England is the B flat Trumpet with a compass from F sharp  
below Middle C to the B flat two octaves above. Usu  
however, its part is written as if it stood in C—that is, as  
a non-transposing instrument—the player transposing at s  
one tone up.

There are still musicians who lament the disappearance  
the F Trumpet, as having a greater volume of tone

tunately, allowed the instrument to lapse into disuse on account of the greater difficulty of playing the higher notes as well as the inertia of production. It does not "speak" so easily.

There is also the Piccolo Trumpet, built in D, which can with ease attack high notes which are outside the range of the ordinary B flat instrument, as well as the rarely used Bass Trumpet.

It is still a matter of dispute as to how the players of Bach's time dealt with his Trumpet parts. He writes shakes and florid passages so high that in some cases even the finest orchestral players will not attempt them except on a specially designed instrument called the Bach Trumpet, of which only a small number are in existence. When occasion arises these instruments have to be hired or borrowed from the makers. Messrs. Hawkes, to my knowledge, have a very fine Bach Trumpet which can easily play these otherwise impossible figures. (But see footnote to page 16.)

It is unnecessary to describe what a Trumpet sounds like. Its misuse as a harmonic instrument, that is, one which can supply part of the subsidiary harmony in a passage where the principal melodic line is distributed elsewhere, is sometimes met with, but is to be deprecated. It is in such passages that the Cornet is needed. Usually, then, we find it used for heroic flourishes and the like. And in such passages a body of two or three Trumpets, such as is met with in the modern symphony orchestra, can sound very fine.

My last words in the section dealing with the Horn referred to the muted Trumpet, which a few years ago threatened to become the bane of the orchestra. Although, as Forsyth has said, the Trumpet suffers the mute more gladly than the other brass instruments, since it preserves its agility under this indignity, the Horn, on the other hand, perhaps owing to its larger bore and its greater difficulty of intonation, seems to resist partial suffocation.

It appears to have been the post-war (I refer to the war of 1914-1918) French composers who were mainly responsible for exploiting the muted Trumpet. The sound, in small doses, is fascinating. But, like everything else, an orchestral trick can rapidly degenerate into a cliché. When this is about to happen, I have noted that music proper veers away from it, and the cliché, whatever it may be, becomes part of the .

enlarged on the matter and made of the once straightforward mute an instrument of torture which at the same time vo the wails of its victims. Moreover, the purveyors of dair music do not stop at over-indulgence in the ordinary wood or metal cone which is the usual Trumpet mute. More less complicated sound-filters of aluminium are also used, and, as a final touch, players are frequently seen to b<sup>l</sup>e their instruments into that symbol of man's indignity, bowler hat.\*

#### (i) *The Trombones*

As I mentioned in the introductory section of the orchestra the Trombone is the oldest perfected instrument in the orchestra. It has undergone no modifications of structure since the fourteenth century, when it was called the Sackbut. The oldest existing specimen is dated 1557, and was probably made by the famous player Hans Neuschel of Nürnberg.

In brief, the Trombone consists of a double length metal tubing, two-thirds of which are taken up by the characteristic slide mechanism, the remaining third being the gradually expanding bell. The instrument is made in four sizes—alto, tenor, bass, double-bass. The first and last of these are very seldom met with, the first because its functions overlap those of the Trumpet, the last because it has been superseded by the Tubas, of which more presently.

Since most composers have been largely ruled by convention, until recently it was almost the invariable rule to find a choir of three Trombones in an orchestra, it being laid down as a text-book maxim that a single Trombone itself does not sound well, i.e. is not correct. Consequently in conventional orchestration the three Trombones—two tenors and one bass—move about in block formation and chords when they play at all. To escape from the tedium

\* It is claimed by Iain Lang in *Background of the Blues* (published by Workers' Music Association, 1943) that mutes were first invented by jazz musicians. This may be so. I complain here only of over-indulgence in their use alike in "straight" music as in jazz. I am in accord with Mr. Lang when he says that the introduction of such devices is justifiable if an effect is successfully achieved. It was perfectly proper for Erik Satie to introduce a battery of typewriters into the score of *Parade*. An American composer, whose name escapes me, even went so far as to write a work called *Aeroplane Sonata* for piano and bull-roarer. But these things should not be done too often.

any such are actually in use to-day outside the opera houses I am unable to say).

That concludes the Brass Section. Next we shall tackle that neglected unit, the Percussion.

#### (k) *The Percussion*

The Percussion Section of an orchestra, also known as the Battery, is often neglected. This may be as much for economic reasons as for any other. The managers of all but the largest orchestras feel that they cannot afford four or five "extras" to look after the "kitchen furniture," to use orchestral players' parlance; in consequence of which one, or at most two, players are supposed to be able to change over from Cymbals and Triangles to Xylophones and Drums as occasion demands. Composers, very properly objecting to such rough-and-ready methods, prefer to limit themselves to circumstances and write down their percussion parts to a minimum, not infrequently leaving them out altogether.

The Battery consists of two kinds of instruments: those of definite pitch and those of indefinite pitch.

To the first belong the Timpani, vulgarly called Kettle-drums, Bells, Glockenspiel, Celesta, Xylophone, Dulcitone, and, some readers may be surprised to learn, the Harp and Piano—both of which are essentially percussive in their nature, and consequently find their place in the orchestral score among the rest of the family.

The percussive instruments without definite pitch are more numerous. They are the Side Drum, Bass Drum, Tenor Drum, Tabor, Tambourine, Triangle, Cymbals, Gong, Castanets, and such special instruments as the Rattle, Wind Machine and Anvil.

Despite economic objections, we should be thankful for at least two things: the timpanist and xylophonist are specialists, whereas their colleagues are as a rule expected to be Jacks-of-all-trades, with the inevitable consequence that they are only too often masters of none. Thus the Bass Drummer frequently has one of a pair of Cymbals tied to his Drum, which he beats with his right hand, while he clatters away at the attached Cymbal with his left, unable to effect any gradation of tone or to employ the various striking techniques upon which so much of the Cymbal's effectiveness depends. Worst of all, some fiend has invented a cymbal-playing gadget which is operated by the foot. The resultant

noise is such that the player might just as well be banging together a couple of old tin plates. The Italian name for Cymbals, by the way, is *Piatti* (plates).

Detailed consideration of these various instruments follows.

Timpani—frequently misspelt Tympani: there is no y in the Italian alphabet—are made in three sizes with a combined range of one octave—from F below Middle C down to the F one octave below. The resonating part of the instrument consists of a copper bowl, across which is stretched a parchment, forming the drum-head. By an arrangement of screws, or taps, the tension of this parchment can be altered. Consequently each of the Timpani can be tuned perfectly within the compass of roughly a fourth. The drum-sticks have flexible handles of wood, the heads being made of sponge, rubber or wood. Depending on the effect the composer intends, one or other of these sticks is used; though not many composers are careful enough to indicate their wishes in this matter. In this respect Berlioz (1803–1869) was a model. The score of his *Symphonie Fantastique* [38] bristles with directions to the timpanist to use first one kind of stick and then another. It is surprising to find that the Timpani came to us from the Arabs, who called them *Naqgareh*, a word which found its way into the English language in the form of *Naker* in the fourteenth century. Chaucer writes of them in *The Knight's Tale* (1386): “Pypes, trompes, nakers, and clariones.”

I have a strong feeling that Orchestral Bells ought not to have been invented. They consist of metal tubes of varying lengths slung on a frame. It is intended that they should reproduce the effect of church bells, which for mechanical reasons are never used in an orchestra: a bell which would sound Middle C would weigh over twenty tons. In practice Orchestral Bells are nearly always out of tune, and are seldom played well because there is often no specialist to do so. They should be hit right at the top of the tubes; otherwise the sound they give out is such a mixture of Partials that it is impossible to distinguish the intended pitch. Apart from this, the quality of tone is ugly and metallic in the extreme. The favourite ones in use are built in the scale of E flat, and have a compass of one octave from the E flat above Middle C upwards.

The Glockenspiel is an amusing little tinkly keyboard instru-

ment—everyone knows Papageno's music in *The Magic Flute* [39]. There are two types in use in England, one with a compass from B flat two octaves above Middle C to C four octaves above; the other possesses an extra ten semitones below the bottom note of the first, bringing it down to the C above Middle C.

The Celesta is a small keyboard instrument of very recent date. It was invented in 1886 by a certain M. Auguste Mustel of Paris, since when many French composers of that day introduced it into their scores. Perhaps the best-known instance of its use is in the music to *La Fée Dragée* from the *Casse Noisette Suite* [40] by Tchaikovsky (1840–1893). The keys operate hammers which strike little metal bars. These are suspended over resonating boxes of wood. The total compass is four octaves from Middle C upwards. In tone it is of exceptional purity and penetration, and has the additional advantage that it cannot get out of tune.

The Xylophone will be familiar to all readers who have witnessed the remarkable agility of that otherwise somewhat cumbersome gentleman, Mr. Teddy Brown. The principle of this instrument is the reverse of the Celesta. It consists of wooden bars resting on tubular metal resonators. These bars are hit with spoon-shaped wooden strikers. The compass to-day is from the B flat above Middle C upwards for two octaves and a tone. The technique is rather like that of the Hungarian Cimbalom, which does not find a place of its own here as being so rarely used in concert orchestras. The Cimbalom has, however, been heard in London in performances of Stravinsky's *Renard*, which has an important solo part written for it.

The Dulcitone, or Typophone, mentioned here for the sake of completeness, is similar to the Celesta, in that it is a keyboard instrument. The sounds, however, are produced from a series of tuning-forks struck by hammers. I have never heard the instrument myself, and know of only one instance of its use: it appears in d'Indy's *Chant de l Cloche*.

We are now left with the Harp and the Piano. For these a very few words must suffice. If the reader's curiosity is not satisfied by the little I propose to devote to these, he must read up the subjects in one or other of the numerous histories of these instruments.

The Harp is a survival from the days of the Pharaohs.

use to-day is profoundly modified—and improved in the way of size and mechanical action. Everyone is familiar with pictures of classical Greeks holding little harps in their laps. These instruments appear not to have had more than a couple of dozen strings. Nowadays, the modern orchestral harp has forty-seven. We first hear of the Harp in Western Europe, in the twelfth century, when it appears in England and Scandinavia. Thence it passed to Ireland, where in course of time, it became the national instrument. In Wales it soon developed into a chromatic instrument with three rows of strings. Forsyth says that Harps of this sort with nearly one hundred strings seem to have actually existed. But the elaboration of their manufacture and the awkwardness of their technique forbade their general employment even in Wales. Thereafter the instrument underwent many changes until, about a hundred and twenty years ago, Sebastian Erard, the famous Harp and Piano maker, introduced his Double-action Harp. In this form the instrument is tuned in C flat. Each string can be stretched or slackened by a pedal. That is, each of the seven strings of the octave; for one pedal operates all the C strings, another all the D strings, and so on. Each pedal has three positions, so that when all the pedals are in the top notch, the harp stands in C flat. When the pedals are moved to the middle notch, the instrument is tuned one semitone higher—C natural. And finally, when all the pedals are depressed, the tuning is in C sharp. The constant shifting of the pedals imposes a great strain on the gut of the strings and, I may add, on the guts of the player. The strings have to be tuned several times during the course of an evening, and not infrequently break with a loud twang—sometimes slapping the player painfully in the face—during a concert. Its technique is too complicated to be gone into here. Suffice it to mention one peculiarity: the little finger of the player is never used.

The modern Pianoforte has several ancestors in the forms of the Harpsichord, the Virginals and the Spinet. The main important difference between the pianoforte and all earlier keyboard instruments is that the wires of the pianoforte are hit with hammers, whereas the earlier instruments had plectrums with which the strings were plucked. Here again the history is very fully documented. Bartolomeo Cristofori (1665–1731), a Florentine Harpsichord maker, ranks as an

important name in the history of the instrument. The English John Broadwood (1732-1812) is another. The first manufacturer to use an iron frame was M. Mangeot, father of the violinist, André Mangeot, who will be known to many readers as an active force in London music of our times.

With one word more we must be content. All the above instruments have this in common: their function in the orchestra is as a rule to be used as ends in themselves. This is an important point to grasp; for the other percussive instruments, which have no definite pitch, are in the main used only to underline a particular rhythm or theme in the orchestra. Only rarely do we meet with them as solo instruments.

We now come to those percussive instruments which have no definite pitch. Briefly as we dealt with the other section of the Battery, we can, indeed must, be even more curt with regard to the remaining section; for there is, in truth, not very much to be said.

The Drums can be divided into two families: those which consist of a single skin stretched across one end of a frame or vessel of wood, copper or earthenware; and those which have two skins, one drawn across each end of an open frame. To the first category belong the Timpani, of course. There are also the Tambourine and a hybrid monster which passes for a Bass Drum in the concert hall.

The Tambourine has come down to us through about two thousand years, remaining unchanged throughout this long history. Its single skin can be tightened or loosened by means of brass rods and nuts. The shallow frame is pierced at intervals to admit little brass plates, like miniature Cymbals, known as jingles, which are strung in pairs on wires. Properly speaking, the instrument should be confined to the theatre, for its very obtrusive noise becomes excessively wearisome. Apart from which it can be used only where some strong local colour, such as a "Spanish atmosphere," is needed; although one must admit that Berlioz (1803-1869) has made good use of it in *Carnaval Romain* [41].

The B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra uses the Bass Drum substitute referred to above. In tone it cannot really compare with the proper double-headed instrument, and the only reason I can imagine why it is used in its stead is that it is easier to transport. But I am not sufficiently informed in the matter to speak with authority.

The Side Drum, Tenor Drum and Tabor are all more or

less or a kind. The Side Drum has two or more pieces of gut stretched across one of the skins. These snares, as they are called, give the drum a peculiar rattling quality, which is very useful in a roll—one of its chief functions.

The Tenor Drum is midway in size between the Side Drum and the Bass Drum. Its shell, or frame, is made of ash wood and is cylindrical in shape. It has no snares. It gives out a peculiarly impressive and sombre tone in the concert hall, but cannot, as a rule, be heard to advantage out of doors, where it is most frequently heard, it being outbalanced by the general body of other instruments in the bands of infantry regiments, which all employ it.

The Tabor is not often heard outside the confines of Provence, where it is popularly supposed to have originated. There exists a Guild of Taborers, who are reputed to possess great skill in drumming intricate rhythms and metres. Bizet (1838–1875) has written for the instrument in *L'Arlésienne* [42].

There remain the Triangle, Cymbals, Gong and Castanets. The first of these was a favourite with composers of the last century to heighten an effect of piquancy or bizarrie. But I doubt whether anyone would really call it his favourite instrument. Wagner understood its use as well as anyone: the Triangle part in *Die Meistersinger* [35] Overture is worth studying, though only for a moment, there being but one note.

"Cymbales be instruments of musick, and be smit together, and soundeth and ringeth," as a sixteenth-century writer, quoted by Forsyth, *op. cit.*, said. To be more precise, Cymbals are large brass plates, slightly concave, so that when hit together only the edges make contact. They depend for their effect on their size: the bigger the better, generally speaking. Elgar wants two pairs to be struck simultaneously in his Second Symphony, which argues that he was aware at the time of writing the work that most orchestras are badly equipped in this respect. A single Cymbal can also be hit with a felt drumstick with good effect; but the instrument should be treated with great respect if it is not to degenerate into that boom-clatter-boom which is still associated with the music-hall bass-drummer, who pounds away at his drum with one hand and batters the cymbals with the other.

The Gong is at its best when made in China. For some reason we in Europe seem unable to obtain the sonority of

of bronze turned over at the edges. Great care is needed in the striking of the instrument. It is all too easy to produce a dull bang instead of the *pianissimo* hollow boom or the gavavising crash which it should give out in *fortissimo*.

The Castanets were originally made of chestnut-wood (Spanish *castaña*), but are nowadays made of some other hard wood, hollowed out to give the characteristic "crack". In Spain these two pieces are known as *macho* (male), which is held in the left hand, while the smaller piece, *hembra* (female), is held in the right. My own surmise as to why the left hand should be regarded as male and the right as female, contrary to general European practice, where the sinistral side of the family is the female line, is that in Spain the matriarchal tradition still lingers: it is no unusual thing to find a man bearing his mother's maiden name instead of his patronymic. This might account for the seeming prominence given to the *hembra* held in the right hand.

There are now only the rarely used freak instruments such as the Rattle, the Wind Machine and the Anvil. Strauss has written for the first two in *Till Eulenspiegel* [30] and in *Don Quixote* [36] respectively. The Rattle is of the old watchman's variety, with which the youth of this ebullient country is wont to enliven parliamentary electioneering meetings.

As to the Wind Machine, I can do no better than to quote Mr. Cecil Forsyth's entertaining description in his classic work, *Orchestration*, from which much of the above has been freely drawn: "The Wind Machine is not strictly a percussion instrument at all. On the other hand, it is certainly not a wind instrument except in the facetious sense. The sound-producing mechanism is a sort of barrel from which most of the staves are missing. In their place there is a covering of black silk. The barrel is laid on its side in a 'bearing' supported by an open 'cradle.' It is then churned round with a handle, so that the silk comes into contact with a 'face' of wood or cardboard. The instrument is used by Strauss in the Episode of the Windmill. The player is wisely directed to keep out of sight of the audience. This imitation of the 'felin winds' that blow 'from off each beaked promontory' may be itself imitative (*pianissimo*) in the seclusion of the home by means of two fingers and an umbrella."

where Wagner (1813-1883) wants to represent the toilers in the underworld forges. There was, as a matter of fact, a real Anvil at Queen's Hall. But as a rule a substitute is found in a set of small steel bars, which reproduce the sound well enough to deceive most people except professional blacksmiths.

#### (I) *The Strings*

To give even a brief résumé of what is known of the history of Stringed Instruments would demand space greater than we can permit ourselves in a book of this scope.\* We must be content with just a few words about the several sources from which the two families of stringed instruments in use in the orchestra are derived, without saying more of the Guitar, Mandolin and Banjo than this: they are all descended from the mediæval Lutes, which formed a large family in the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. Some historians make a distinction between the Lute and Guitar families. Admittedly they are of very different construction. Nevertheless, the principle of a body of strings stretched over a hollow resonating box, the strings being plucked in the one case by the fingers, in the other by a plectrum, is common to both. One point, however, must be conceded: that the Lute is of Arabian origin (Arabic *al'aud*, the word Lute being derived through a mistaken notion that the "l" of the definite article *al* is part of the word *'aud*. Only the Portuguese retain the word in full in the form *Alaude*); whereas the word Guitar is cognate with the Greek *Kithara*, whence, I should like to add, the word Gittern, or Cittern, of Chaucer's day, and the Hungarian Zither, Indian Sitar, are also in my opinion derived. The Lute is now obsolete. The Guitar and Mandolin are used only in those countries where one may stand beneath a lady's window and serenade her without contracting pneumonia. And the Banjo is generally relegated to what in my childhood were known as nigger minstrels—though whether any still exist I cannot say.

So we may comfortably turn to the Bowed Instruments, which to-day are divided into two families, represented by the Violin and Viol families.

\* Furthermore, there is some conflict of opinion concerning the origins of many of the instruments here briefly discussed. No doubt further research will explain much that is at present obscure, and even contradictory, in the evidence available to-day.

The latter of these has only one surviving ——————  
the Double-bass. The Viols, which until 1940 were made and played by that picturesque recluse, the late Arn Dolmetsch, at Haslemere, were the precursors (but, it must be stressed again, not the ancestors) of the Violins. They undeniably possess a charm of their own, but are definitely inferior from the points of view of tone and general technique of playing. They were made in three sizes: the Treble, or Descant Viol; the Tenor, the Alto and the Bass Viol, or Viola-gamba (Italian *gamba*, leg). There were various intermediate forms before the Violin was arrived at three centuries ago, but we need not bother with them here.

Historically it would be better to consider the Double-bass next. But we will adhere to our plan of working down score and leave it until the bottom stave where it belongs.

The Violin family has three members: the Violin itself, the Viola and the Violoncello. In practice, I may remind readers, the general plan of the four-part vocal division is preserved by having two bodies of Violins—the "firsts" and "seconds"—the Basses, as a rule, "doubling" the Cello by playing with them an octave below. There are, however, occasions when this four-part arrangement is subdivided. Depending on the number of strings available, the Violins, Violas, Cellos and, more rarely, the Basses, may be put up so that each section plays two, three or any number of parts up to eight.

Those of us who are not actually violinists, but who have had the opportunity of handling a Violin, might well pause to consider how many pieces of wood go to make the instrument. Let us see. Holding it in our lap longitudinally so that it faces in the direction held when it is being played, we have at the extreme left the Scroll and the Four Pegs, Finger-board, the Neck, the two Shoulders, the Ribs outside, the "Hips," the Belly, the Back, the Tailpiece, the "pin," the Bridge, and, inside, the Soundpost. Nineteen pieces, you will say. You are wrong. There are at least seventy separate pieces of wood in most instruments; these about sixty are built into the main body of the instrument, the remaining ten being fittings.

In the preliminary enough was said about the general functions of the String Section of the orchestra for us to dispense with further reference now. Nor is it my intention

to do so. It will suffice to remark in a general way that sounds can be produced by several methods. Normally the bow, which achieved its ideal form since Bach's day, when it was possible to play on three strings simultaneously, is drawn across the string, thus setting it in vibration and producing the notes. These notes are of two main varieties, open and stopped. The open notes are those which are given out by the natural tunings of the strings—G, D, A, E. These open notes differ materially in quality from the stopped notes, which are produced by placing the finger firmly on the string. There are also those sounds known as Harmonics. These are of two kinds, natural and artificial. The first of these are produced by placing the finger lightly on a "node," which is a point which breaks the subsidiary vibrations of the string and produces an attenuated sound one octave above the written note. (See the remarks on Partials, page 41.) The artificial Harmonics are produced by stopping the string with one finger on a given note and lightly touching it with another finger at the interval of a fourth above. The resultant sound is two octaves above the lower of the stopped notes.

The quality of the sound varies greatly with the position of the bow on the strings. Normally the bow lies more or less midway between the bridge and the end of the finger-board. For pianissimo playing, however, the bow is shifted nearer to the finger-board, and for certain effects may be moved practically on to the bridge itself. This style is designated *sul ponticello*, on the bridge. The resultant sound is a mysterious scratching not unlike that of a mouse behind the wainscot in the dead of night. It is in the representation of such tense moments, when the lonely watcher by the fire-side feels as unstrung as the fiddle is liable to become, that this effect is mostly employed.

In addition, one sometimes comes across the direction *col legno*, with the wood. This means that the player taps the strings with the wooden part of the bow. This is not popular among players who, in the words of Mr. Forsyth again (*op. cit.*), prefer to keep the varnish on their fiddlesticks and the hair on their strings—both in their proper places.

No further mention need be made here of the various bowing techniques, such as *détaché*, *martelé*, *sautillé*, *jété*, the slur and the *louré*. But we may note that chords

those with two notes on adjacent strings, i.e. double-stopp can be played together. The rest must be broken, owing the curve of the bridge, which makes the sounding of n than two adjacent strings simultaneously impossible.

There is also the method of plucking the strings with finger (*pizzicato*), the sound of which will be sufficie familiar to every reader without further description.

All that has been said above applies equally to the V and the 'Cello. It would be as well to remark concer the former, however, that its cumbersome size, taken in c junction with the other factors, makes it one of the l satisfactory instruments in the orchestra. I know that I s have all the Viola players in the country at my heels if above ever comes to their ears. But in tone it cannot c pare with either the Violin or the 'Cello, nor can it appro them in dexterity. The answer to this is that one sho not attempt to compare them. Quite so. But in that c the Viola should be a beast apart, and should not be cal upon to supply the middle voice of the quartet which ou not to differ from its neighbours in any respect other th of pitch. The Viola is really an alto instrument. Wha needed to complete the quartet is a true tenor.

We have now arrived at the last stave of our orchest score: the Double-bass. As I remarked just now, this inst ment differs from the rest of the string quintet in that it m closely approximates to the ancestors of the Violin family, Viols. Some authorities believe that it is younger than eit the Violins or the Viols, since it embodies the characteris of each. For whereas it has the sloping shoulders and flat back of the old Viola-da-Gamba, it has the four corner the *f* sound-holes and the belly of the Violin. Until a f years ago it was the common practice of players in t country to hold the bow in the way in which the Viol bc used to be held. It is difficult to explain without a diagr the difference between the two methods. I will cont myself with drawing a simile between the over- and und hand grips of a tennis racket, these corresponding to Violin and Viol methods respectively. In Germany the V grip is still in use, which explains why most music publish in that country has the strong beats, which are, of cou down-bows in fiddle music, marked as up-bows for the Bass. The player, it may be remarked, sits on a special seat, rat

like a clerk's office stool, to facilitate quick movement up and down the long finger-board.

The instrument has four strings, tuned in fourths from contra E to G. Formerly it had only three. But this instrument was smaller than the present-day one; and although the tone was much finer, composers so felt the need of the bottom E string that the sacrifice of tone was made. For some time it was not uncommon to see half the Basses in an orchestra with three and half with four strings. One or two instruments in London orchestras have an extra length of string which can be brought into action by a simple mechanism. This enables the player to get four more semi-tones, so that his instrument stands an octave below the Cellos.

Many people, including myself, feel the need for a radical change in Double-basses. The necessity of having exactly the right number in an orchestra is more urgent than for any other instrument. If there are too few they cannot be heard if there are too many the combined tone becomes woolly and useless. London is fortunate in possessing some very fine players. All of these are virtuoso players and can give support to the instrument as of some solo value. But in general practice the Double-bass must bear the stigma of unique distinction: it is essentially an orchestral instrument which has to be used, except in chamber orchestras, in large numbers to achieve its effect.

#### *(m) The Conductor*

And now for the first time we mention the Conductor who is of paramount importance in the orchestra. Without him, the finest orchestra in the world is like an engine without a magneto, a piano without a pianist, a race-horse without a jockey. It is he who directs, controls, subdues and excites his forces. Upon him depends ultimately the quality of the performance.

The original function of a conductor was simply that of a time-beater. Indeed, in the beginning of the sixteenth century no more was necessary. Consequently the chief singer in a choir, or the harpsichordist in an orchestra, or in concertos, the soloist himself, was expected to set the tempo and, in moments when he himself was not too fully occupied, to beat time with his hand in the air, or with a roll of paper or a stick. In this last instance it was common

at operatic performances for the conductor to beat time or his desk, in which connection I may quote the following from *A Comparison between the French and Italian Musick and Operas* published in London in 1709: "Some years since the Master of the Musick in the Opera at Paris had an Elbow Chair and Desk plac'd on the Stage, where, with the Score in One Hand, and a Stick in the other, he beat Time on a Table put there for that purpose, so loud, that he made a greater noise than the whole Band, on purpose to be heard by the Performer. By degrees they remov'd this Abuse from the Stage to the Musick Room, where the Composer beats the Time in the same manner, and as loud as ever. The same was observ'd in London six or seven years ago, but since the Italian Masters are coming among us, and the Opera's have been introduced, they have put a stop to that ridiculous Custom, which was founded more upon an ill Habit than any Necessity there was for it, as doing more harm than good, for the Opera's are better Performed now without it than any piece of music was formerly because the Eye was too much Distracted, being obliged to mind the beating of the Measure, and the Score at the same time; besides, it kept the Singer and the Player in too much Subjection, and Fear of errors, by which means they were depriv'd of the Liberty, so absolutely necessary to Musick, and which gives a Strength and Spirit to the Notes."

At Spohr's first appearance in this country, on April 10 1820, he astonished musical London by using a baton when he conducted at a Philharmonic Concert.

Conductors not infrequently have cut entertaining figure in the world. Perhaps M. Jullien, born in 1812, was the most eccentric. He founded the Promenade Concerts at Covent Garden. He introduced the firing of muskets into his celebrated quadrille, *The Huguenots*. At times he would be shot out of a trap-door, baton in hand, giving the signal to the orchestra to attack at the same moment. He invariably conducted all works of Beethoven in white gloves and with a jewelled baton, handed to him on a silver salver. Having in these ways astonished the world, he lost his entire fortune was locked up for debt in Paris and eventually committed suicide in a fit of insanity.

A great deal more might be written about the function of the Conductor, functions which of late years have reached unprecedented complexities which call for ever more and

THE QUALITIES OF MUSICALISMS. RICHARD SCHERZER, whom I have already mentioned as being in my opinion one of the best conductors of contemporary music of to-day, has set forth what those qualities must be in his *Handbook of Conducting*. I recommend everyone, whether he be professional musician or not, to read it.

As was mentioned above, the primitive function of a Conductor is that of a mere time-beater. With regard to a properly trained orchestra of to-day, however, this aspect of his activities is practically negligible. At most—and this is important—some clear indication of the first beat of a bar must be given. But for the rest a conductor's gestures tend to indicate the moulding of a phrase, the adjustment of relative tone between the different instruments so that a proper balance and ensemble is secured, to ensure accuracy of attack and induce variations of speed where necessary. It is above all, important that the Conductor thoroughly knows his score by heart before a note is played. When studying his work he must be sure in his own mind of the resultant sound at any given moment. He must know, for example, at if a chord is scored in a certain manner, it may be necessary to see that one of the Horns plays a little more brightly than the player, who has only his own part in front of him and has no idea of what his colleagues may be doing, might otherwise do.

Instances of the need for constant alertness, thorough knowledge of each instrument's capabilities, and sympathy with many schools and periods of music might be given. But if I have indicated the importance which attaches to the player on the orchestral instrument, as personified in the Conductor, I feel that that is all that is necessary.

## V

### OCCASIONS FOR MUSIC

#### (i) CELEBRATION AND RITUAL

I WANT the reader to keep clearly before him the scheme of this book. After examining the Physical Basis of Music, we discussed the Nature of Musical Thought. We then briefly glanced at some different kinds of music, and then

expatiated on How Music is ...  
discussion of the necessity for Musical Forms; then we talked of the Notation used to write down the ideas; and lastly we ran over the Instruments on which music is played. I now want to write something of *when* music is played: Occasions for Music, of which the first I shall treat of will be Celebration and Ritual.

I think it is clearly established that all the communities which mankind has set up for himself, including our own, have been governed to a large extent by ritual observances. Various phenomena which, as mankind has progressed towards his emancipation from the darkness of unreason, apprehensive terror of what he has called the supernatural, towards rationalism and a fearless attitude to the realities of his environment (both internal and external), have caused him to set up a string of magical and mystical observances which in the main were designed to ward off imagined evils, propitiate gods which he from time to time made in his own image, and concomitantly praise with thanksgiving those same gods for the successful outcome of his major undertakings. Chief among these rituals have been those associated with birth, circumcision, the giving in marriage, death, wars, harvests and the succession of the seasons. All over the world mankind seems to have undergone these similar phases. In places as far remote as Peru and East Africa, which have never, as far as is known, had the slightest physical contact with one another, almost identical rituals have been the practice. Tottering on its uneasy apex, this particular civilisation of ours is still pocketed with relics from earlier cultures. Our growing-pains are accompanied by anguished struggles to cast off the heritages of past times. Here and there, in this twentieth-century England, little groups of people can still be found "praying for rain," as they quaintly put it. In peace-time they pray for the continued health and well-being of their sovereign monarch; in war-time they pray for the death of their enemies. At all times they pray for their young as soon as they are born, for the fruitful union of marriages, for the future of the "souls" of their dead. They observe ritual anointings with oil and coronations of their high priests and kings. They march to war with ritual and celebrate peace with ritual.

And for all these occasions mankind needs Music.

There is in my mind no question but that music does in

fact put a kind of Dutch courage into people. Music, more than any other man-made thing, has a potency capable of inspiring frenzy and of soothing distress. Music: anodyne, stimulant, narcotic, enervator. Music for weddings, baptisms and funerals. (In Europe the recently imported magical rite of circumcision has been rationalised into a so-called scientific necessity under such names as hygienic prophylaxis, that the sacrificial knife of the priest has given way to the scalpel of the surgeon with all the blind authority with which medicine's high calling is endowed. One thing only appears to be missing in the modern version of this ancient ritual music, with the corresponding loss of performing rights for composers.) Music for war marches, peace marches, social demonstrations. Music for propitiations of gods, celebrations of harvests, prayers for deliverance from dangers, prayers for atonement of sins.

All of these social manifestations, these group activities still play an important part in the life of the community. Celebration and Ritual are the primary functions of Music.

#### (ii) CONTEMPLATION AND EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE

It must be hypothetical to estimate at what level of culture mankind first began to apply music to his own immediate ends, to make music to be enjoyed by himself as an end in itself without reference to celebration or ritual.

It might seem that the shepherd boy as personified by the legendary Daphnis of Greek antiquity played his reed pipe purely for the pleasure he derived from doing so. I suspect that music may originally have had the function of driving away evil spirits who would cause his flocks to stray, of "keeping up his spirits" as we say. We know from the story also that his music acted as a love-charm on Chloe. Further, one can still see in the remoter parts of Europe a shepherd leading his flocks as he plays his pipe, with the obvious intention that they should follow his music.

But one has only to consider music in Europe up to certainly the fifteenth century to see that Art-music was mainly the prerogative of the Church, was still intended for celebration and ritual; while the Folk-music consisted of Songs and Dances which, it is quite clear, were either survivals of pagan rites or expressions of popular feeling.

about topical social circumstances. Such music was the accompaniment to some activity: harvesting or such-like. And look at the English Sea Shanties: all are functional.

People were not yet sitting down to listen to music as an emotional or contemplative experience.

The precursor of such an attitude to music was the bard or wandering minstrel, whose main business was to act as a courier, messenger and revolutionary leader among the peasants. Hence, in times of social stress, Acts of Parliament were passed outlawing "musicians, rogues and vagabonds." The words of the minstrel's songs frequently had hidden meanings, a necessity imposed for security reasons, and were sung in alliterative verse (before the spread of Arab civilisation from the Mediterranean brought with it the rhymed verse which has stayed with us ever since) to the accompaniment of music. In such heroic tales related by the bards music was very much the junior partner in the entertainment. No one could read, therefore poetry could not be read: it was, as it should be, sung.

The first period in which music-to-be-listened-to can be said to have established itself must be during the sixteenth century, when we first hear of Madrigals and Consorts of Viols—what we to-day should call a little String Orchestra.

There are, of course, earlier examples, such as *Sumer Is Icumen In* [14], which dates back to the beginning of the thirteenth century. This remarkably lovely song, already mentioned on page 33, seems without doubt to have been absolute pleasure-music. But instances such as this are rare in music of the period. Therefore, as I say, the most convenient starting-point seems to be the fifteenth century in Flanders.

Now what kind of music was this early music-to-be-listened-to?

First the Madrigals. The origin and meaning of the word Madrigal are still obscure. Some attribute it to the Italian *madre*, mother, hence a song to Our Lady; others think it derives from the Greek *mandra*, a sheep, whence the pastoral character of most madrigals; while a third school of thought derives it from the Spanish *madrugada*, dawn, a morning song. However that may be, it seems clear that the Madrigal is descended from the songs of the old Troubadours and Minnesingers, itinerant minstrels who wandered through

mostly pastoral in character, and usually of considerable contrapuntal complexity. The earliest records of such Madrigals go back to the end of the fifteenth century. Rare examples are to be found in the works of Obrecht (c. 1440-1505), Josquin des Prés (1445-1521), Johannes Tinctoris (1446-1511) and others. All of these Flemish composers were primarily composers of church music.

From Flanders the Madrigal travelled. Arcadelt (c. 1514-c. 1560), a Fleming, migrated to Italy. There he published his First Book of Madrigals in 1538. This book was so popular that it ran through sixteen editions in eighty years. Costanzo Festa (c. 1495-1545) was the first important Italian composer to write Madrigals. After him came the Gabrieli, father (1510-1586) and son (1557-1612); Palestrina (1525-1594), whose output of secular music was negligible in quantity; Vecchi (c. 1551-1605); Marenzio (c. 1553-1599), who had a big influence in England; Vittoria (c. 1540-c. 1614), who went to live in Spain, and whose music was also mainly ecclesiastical; Cavalieri (1550-ante 1600), who has been mentioned before (see page 45); Croce (c. 1557-1609), principally known for his church music, although his Madrigals and Motets, which are likewise secular part-songs, are very fine; and Monteverde (1567-1643), also mentioned above in connection with opera (page 45).

From Italy the Madrigal went to Germany, where it flourished considerably. A name which cannot be omitted at this point is Praetorius (1571-1621), often called the father of German music. After him came the famous trio of Schein, Scheidt and Schütz, born within a year of one another—1585, 1586, 1587. These three were the musical grandfathers of the great Bach (1685-1750).

In France the great Paris School, after a history of four hundred years, petered out with Firmin Carron in the middle of the fifteenth century, after which there seems to have been a lull in musical activity of importance until Lully (1632-1687). True, the French had developed their own Chanson, which may have accounted in part for the fact that the Madrigal did not take root there. But France was racked with wars during the period we are discussing, and for a long while after. Culture seems to have been at a low ebb.

In England several Italian Madrigals were published during

the sixteenth century, and by 1580 it was firmly established itself [44].

At the same time a parallel development had been going on in instrumental music. This was the rise of the Viol family, which was invented in the fifteenth century. Viol music was pure and absolute music. The English were pre-eminent masters in this, which was virtually a new art. Fayrfax (d. 1521), Tye (c. 1497-c. 1572), Tallis (c. 1520-1585), White (1530-1585), Byrd (1538-1623), Morley (1558-1603), Farnaby (c. 1560-c. 1600), Bull (c. 1562-1628), Dowland (1563-1626), Weelkes (c. 1570-1623) and many other great names adorn the history of the madrigalists and violists of this island [45].

At this point the reader would do well to look at the folding chart at the end of the book to get a bird's-eye view of European musical history.

It must be remembered that although we are now talking of the beginnings of pleasure-music there was still no such thing as a Concert. Music was still played either on some special occasion, or, as in this period, in the private houses of the nobility and gentry.

It is important to note that this period saw the rise of the new "middle class" of merchants—the burghers (bourgeoisie) who were "those who lived in towns" (*burgs*, such as Hamburg in Germany, Cherbourg in France, Edinburgh in Scotland). One of the symptoms of the class-antagonism between this new class and the "common people" was a series of restrictive measures against, and even active persecution of, the people's music. Musicians were outlawed as "rogues and vagabonds." The reason for this is to be found in the fact that in all periods of acute social oppression the oppressed classes have been compelled to band together secretly in defence of their poor "rights." Music, frequently in the form of songs whose words had hidden political meanings, has at all such times been the vehicle of expression used by the people.\* This, then, is the source of much of the

\* Examples from later historical times are the songs of the Levellers in Cromwell's day, the Chartists of the last century and the American Negro plantation songs and the "Blues" of our own times. (See the *Background of the Blues*, already cited on page 66, for a most stimulating account of the social context of this particular kind of Folk-music. In addition, the reader is strongly recommended to consult *The Singing Englishman*, by A. L. Lloyd, also published by The Workers' Music Association, as this book is in the press.)

**FOlk-MUSIC of Europe.** The non-functional Art-music has, on the other hand, been the product and prerogative of the well-to-do upper and middle classes.

It was at this time an essential part of an educated person's curriculum to study music; that is, to learn to sing and to play some instrument or instruments. These were the Viols, the Lute, the Recorders, and, a little later, the Hautboy and Flute. The more well-to-do kept a band of musicians permanently employed as members of the household; and music was played during and after meals. One can still see in old houses and palaces the huge refectories, or banqueting-halls, with their musicians' galleries at one end. From time to time a meal would be interrupted with a dance, just as to-day we have our *diners-dansants*. Nowadays, of course, fashions have changed somewhat: instead of discoursing sweet, gentle Ayres, Pavans and Galliards as a soothing aid to digestion, we have blaring and dyspeptic Swing Music in our restaurants, so designed that it is impossible to hear oneself speak without shouting, and, when shouting, impossible to hear the music. Contemplation and Emotional Experience. . . .

It will have occurred to the reader that the advent of this pleasure-music entailed a radically different attitude on the part of musicians and people generally. Up to this point, I repeat, music was designed for a definite occasion, a ceremony or a ritual. Now we have music to be listened to as music and for the pleasure of the thing. Entertainment-music now came thick and fast. Masques, operas, part-songs, music for little orchestras were now being produced and consumed in increasing quantities. The day when a Consort of instruments was to turn into a Concert was not far distant.

In London the first Concerts open to the public were given by a certain John Bannister between 1672 and 1678. They were held at his house in Whitefriars, Fleet Street, daily at four in the afternoon, and the price of admittance was one shilling. A little later, Thos. Britton, described as "the small-coal man," gave public subscription concerts at his house in Clerkenwell. The subscription was ten shillings a year. Then arose several concert-giving societies, among which many readers will recognise the name of Salomon, who commissioned Haydn to write symphonies for them. This was in the last decade of the eighteenth century. The Royal Philharmonic Society was founded in 1813. August Manns started his concerts at the Crystal Palace. Jullien, mentioned

above (page 82), founded the Promenade Concerts at Covent Garden. The Queen's Hall Concerts, the Richter Concerts, the Broadwood Concerts and many more grew up. Music had become a solemn business. Music was itself the Ritual. Philosophical interpretations of music were expounded. People were unable to listen to a Symphony without asking What It Was About. There were those who professed to hear in the opening notes of some great work Fate Knocking on the Door. Others again—or perhaps they were the same people—described visions of Moonlight when listening to a Sonata. An entirely new trade of analytical dissection of not only music but of the unfortunate composer came into being and flourished. This New or Higher Criticism professed to take into account every most private detail of a composer's life and relate it to this or that work of his. Beethoven, for example, was found, owed the rent for three weeks in April 1800. Ah, said the knowing ones, his preoccupation with internal spiritual things can be seen to date from that moment.

This was indeed Emotion. But what, the reader will ask, had happened to Contemplation? Frankly, I do not know. For some time before and for a while after the turn of the last century people seemed largely to have lost sight of the idea of music. How did we define Music at the beginning of this book? "Music," we said, "is movement of sound, consisting of rhythmical and metrical patterns." It is agreed, the interplay of these patterns as apprehended by the ear that gives one pleasure. How, then, had these musical accretions of the so-called philosophical import grown up? And why were people told that unless they adopted this attitude to music it was impossible truly to appreciate it? To answer these questions we must go back a bit.

If you consider the folding chart again you will notice that the centre of musical activity has from time to time shifted from one country to another. I do not wish at this point to anticipate the Section on the Genesis of Music. That will be sufficient for our purpose of the moment to begin by looking at what was happening during the period we are discussing: the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries. From the Netherlands the emphasis moved to Italy, thence to Germany. The English School arose about 1520 or so and persisted until about 1760, our one important composer at that time being Arne, who wrote *Rule, Britannia*. (This, to give a topical touch, was first performed at Cliveden, by the way.) It was

diminish in quantity or importance right up to Puccini (1858-1924), an immense musical activity had sprung up in Germany. In the last century music-publishing became a vigorous enterprise. Big businesses were built up: Peters, Breitkopf and Härtel, Schott, Augener, Novello, Chappell, Durand and many other music-publishing houses were founded. Music was in free circulation. It was easily accessible. At the same time railways were being built; steamships came into being. Artists could travel with comparative ease. England was flooded with Continental music and musicians. Her own slender product had been stamped out by the influx of Italian opera and Händel combined. For any English artist to get a hearing at all he or she had to adopt a foreign name.

The rise of industrialism had so absorbed the attention of the only class of people who had the means to indulge themselves in cultured activity, that serious interest in music, which was contemptuously described as an "uneconomic proposition," declined. It became a matter of mere fashion among the old aristocracy, who had as yet been untouched by the novel taint of industrialism, to "patronise the arts." The artist became a paid servant, who was compelled by economic necessity to purvey the kind of art that was acceptable to his masters, or to accept the alternative of "starving in a garret" as the price of his artistic integrity.

All of this will be dealt with more fully later on.

Now all this, though seeming to have taken us a long way from our line of inquiry, is relevant, indeed essential, to our understanding of the changed attitude to music in the last century. As has been said above, concerts of music had become rituals in themselves. It is evident to me that mankind needs rituals. When the old rituals fell into disrepute in the Age of Reason, man, the rationalist, made of music (among other things) a ritual. Moreover, he built around music an entire mythology. The source of this curious phenomenon was, as might be expected, Germany, the home of philosophy, metaphysics, *Sturm und Drang*\* and many other queer things.

It was, then, the efflorescence of philosophy and metaphysics in Germany to which can be attributed this new and strange approach to music.

\* The "Stürmer und Dränger" were the poets of the German Stress Period (1770-1784).

I will abandon this problem for the moment and return to a final consideration of Contemplation and Emotional Experience from which we have wandered a good way. I do not propose to examine the music itself in any detail at the moment. That must wait until the next Section.

I have shown, then, how this new attitude to music grew up. People went to concerts to enjoy and, ultimately, to destroy music. At this point a most curious thing happened.

It will have been clear that in earlier times music was designed, one may say, to be evocative of deep feelings, whether of worship, thanksgiving or what not. And, in fact, one is forced to believe that people took a very serious part in these rituals and celebrations. People were actually moved to fervour, and expressed it in song and dance. But although it might be shown that for a time at least the new pleasure-music was simpler in intention, less profound, shall we say, it rapidly increased in complexity again; moreover, it cannot be said that at any time there were no composers of deeply evocative music. The simplicity of a Purcell (1658-1695) was a simplicity of texture. We of to-day find it as capable of moving us emotionally as the devotional music of, say, Palestrina (1525-1594). But now people began going to concerts. They sit and listen to music. And how they sit! Those who respond to the music are inhibited from expressing their response. A tapping toe, the smothered bodily responses, the expression of intellectual stimulation, are frowned on and even, in this politest of countries, hissed. And rightly so. There is nothing more disturbing than a sensitive neighbour at a concert who expresses, however inadequately, his reactions to the music. Consequently, these new devotional exercises of the concert hall are very secret and private manifestations. It is with difficulty that those sensitive to the music can contain themselves. I often think that habitual concert-going eventually inhibits the response altogether. Certainly one's fellow-listeners look miserable enough. It is interesting to speculate as to whether these discomforts of the concert hall are compensated by the canned music provided by a much harassed B.B.C., which enables music to be heard in the privacy of the home, where one can, if so minded, dance in the nude in front of a mirror like the poet Swinburne.

It is evident that this aspect of music, that is, its enjoyment, is in a most unsatisfactory position to-day. And the paradoxical part of it is that music itself is undoubtedly at a

higher level of perfection than ever before. By this I mean not that this or that work by a contemporary composer is "better" (whatever that might mean) than music written at any other period. It is meaningless to say that a string quartet by Webern (b. 1883) is either better or worse than a string quartet by Beethoven (1770-1827). Each may be perfect music in its way and of its kind. In talking of the level of perfection of music to-day, I mean that music is being written of an importance and significance equal to the greatest periods of the past; that, moreover, it is more readily accessible in the printed and audible forms (the concert room, the gramophone, the radio) than ever before; that the standard of performance is, from the evidence available, considerably higher than has obtained in past history; and that the audiences are, on the whole, willing, eager and discriminating listeners.

And at that we must leave the Contemplation and Emotional Experience of music, and pass on to other things.

### (iii) MUSIC-DRAMA AND OPERA

Related to the foregoing instances of Occasions for Music—Celebration and Ritual, Contemplation and Emotional Experience—are those dramatic representations of which music is an integral part. These have formed a very important part of mankind's aesthetic activities, connected originally with magic and religious manifestations and later developing into purely secular entertainment.

It must be realised that dramatic representation of various religious and quasi-religious rites has been a feature of devotional exercises all over the world. We can but glance at some European examples of these in a book of this scope.

The European tradition grew mainly out of the ancient Greek Dionysiac Festivals, which later were grafted on to the Christian Church. The Greek dithyramb was the essence of these rites of Dionysos, who was identical with the Egyptian Osiris in his attributes and legendary life: the parthenogenetic birth, the pre-ordained immolation and final resurrection, all attributed to the later Christ. The mysterious Goat Song, or *tragōidia*, of the Greek drama is worthy of mention in this further example of dramatised song and dance.

In post-Christian times the Mithraic ritual in connection with December 25 appears along with the Teutonic legend of the Egg of Eostretide at Easter. There were the "Winchester

pes" in the ninth century A.D., the "Mysteries" of France the eleventh century, and the English Miracle Plays and oralities of the twelfth century, which were borrowed from France. All of these were religious or quasi-religious rites which music, dancing and singing formed an essential part. Mention has already been made of the appearance of legitimate Opera in the seventeenth century. The actual prototype of *Dramma per la Musica* was a representation of the classical story of *Euridice* by Peri (1561–1633). Thereafter, as sacred drama declined, Opera developed through Monteverde (1567–1643), Cavalli (1600–1676), Lully (1632–1687), Alessandro Scarlatti (1658–1725), Purcell (1658–1695), Reinhard Keiser (1673–1739)—the first Singspiel to be publicly performed in German was Johann Theile's *Adam und Eva* 1678—Händel (1685–1759), Pergolesi (1710–1735), Arne (1710–1778), Gluck (1714–1787), Mozart (1756–1791), Beethoven (1770–1827), Weber (1786–1826), Meyerbeer (1791–64), Rossini (1792–1868), Verdi (1813–1901), Wagner (1813–83) and so down to our own day. This catalogue of names the reader will observe, arranged chronologically. They are not sample names out of the many which have made important contributions to the art of opera, whose centre of gravity has shifted from one country to another as time has passed. In the next Section (p. 98) a rather more detailed discussion of Opera will be embarked on. At the moment it is sufficient to have mentioned it in connection with Occasions for Music.\*

#### (iv) LIGHTER FORMS: INCIDENTAL AND DANCE

We will now turn to two other most important functions of music: Incidental Music and Dance Music.

In a sense it can be said that music for religious services and other rituals and celebrations is incidental. But the usual connotation of the term Incidental is music which from time to time accompanies the action of a play, where musical occasions are portrayed on the stage, as distinct from the music of operas and such-like where the music is an integral part of the entertainment.

Incidental Music as such would seem to be of comparatively little origin. In the first instance, as has already been shown,

\* The interested reader is referred to Professor Dent's *Opera* (Scolar Books Ltd.), for a scholarly and most readable survey of the subject which is necessarily more complete than the cursory outline which is all that has been attempted here.

and drama were one. Just as music on the one hand freed itself from ritual and began to lead an independent life of its own, so too did drama. Examples can be found in musical work with spoken passages interpolated just as in the pieces of a certain period begin to have what we call Incidental Music. The two developments are parallel. Incidental Music, then, consists of preludes and interludes, dances and songs. A very few examples will suffice to illustrate this.

There was the Incidental Music to Milton's *Comus* by Henry Lawes (1600-1662); and composers such as Matthew Locke (1630-1677) and Christopher Gibbons (1615-1676) added a lot of Incidental Music to plays now mostly forgotten. There were the Theatre Ayres of Purcell (1658-1695), the incidental Music to *Egmont* [46] and *Leonora Prohaska* by Gluck (1770-1827), to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* [47] by Mendelssohn (1809-1847), and to *L'Arlésienne* [42] by Massenet (1838-1875), and in our own day Delius (1863-1934) has added Incidental Music to Flecker's *Hassan* [48]. And so on. Independently of all this the Dance emancipated itself from the same way. Mention has already been made of the dance forms in the Section on Musical Forms.

Dances originally were directly representational. And since the things they represented were mainly concerned with fertility and such-like they were what we nowadays would call lascivious in character. It was only later that they reached a degree of formalisation and stylisation. Nevertheless the fact remains that a basis of sexual symbolism is more or less clearly in every existing dance; must be the nature of things.

more puritan elements in society have from time to time raised outcries and succeeded in modifying certain aspects of the dance. As already mentioned on page 32, the Pavan was at one time condemned for its lascivious character. Likewise the Sarabande, which we now know to be a slow and rather stiff formal dance, was originally of lascivious character that Mariana (1536-1623), writing in a treatise against Public Amusements, inveighed against it as follows: "Entre las otras invenciones ha salido estos años de 1600 y cantar tan lascivo en las palabras, tan feo en las danzas que basta para pegar fuego aun a las personas muy resistentes." (Amongst other inventions there has appeared in recent years a dance and song, so lascivious in its words,

so ugly in its movements, that it is enough to inflame even very modest people.) Under Philip II of Spain, that gastronomic recluse, this dance was altogether suppressed. But nowadays the only examples familiar to us are the staid movements of considerable gravity in the Suites of Bach and his contemporaries.

Dancing, albeit it retained vestiges of its original ritual character among the common people, became an important social activity, which is retained to this day. Further mention of this, also, must be postponed to a later Section.

\* \* \*

Occasions for Music thus fall into four distinct categories: Celebration and Ritual, Contemplation and Emotional Experience, Music-drama and Opera, and the lighter forms such as Incidental Music and the Dance.

## VI

### RECAPITULATION

BEFORE we proceed farther I wish to interpolate here a very brief Recapitulation of the foregoing.

The Physical Basis of Music resides in a recurring series of rhythmical, metrical and melodic patterns, which, apprehended by the ear, are capable of inducing emotional and intellectual, in short æsthetic, reactions in the listener. These fundamental principles can be dissected up to a point; this or that work can be shown to display the prerequisites as laid down in doctrinaire form by theoreticians. But in so doing one runs the grave danger of killing the very thing one loves by thus sterilising the life out of that very vital thing, Music.

The Nature of Musical Thought is less susceptible to factual analysis, being rooted in fantasy and the unconscious mind of the composer, upon which an acquired technique necessary for the clear expression of his ideas is superimposed.

For a composer to cast his musical thoughts into a recognised or recognisable mould or form is as essential as is the grammar and syntax of everyday speech. A conglomeration

of sounds, no ~~means~~  
adequately convey to the listener "musical ~~sense~~  
there is an apprehensible inner logic perceptible.

Musical ideas in Europe and the Americas are transcribed in a system of notation laid down as early as the tenth century by Guido d'Arezzo, who evolved the principle of a system of lines and spaces on which various symbols are written, these symbols conveying to the executive musician an approximation to the composer's intentions. This system is imperfect, even when supplemented by verbal directions. There is no absolute standard of speed in notation. A crotchet or a quaver may be played at any conceivable speed within the limits of, say, 56 to 212 to the minute. The actual speed in performance relies partly on the verbal directions at the beginning of the piece of music, such as Quick, Slow, etc. But in the main the composer has to rely on the musicianship of the performer for an adequate rendering of his music.

The instruments on which music of to-day is performed vary in antiquity. There are at present about twenty-five different kinds of such instruments in use, excluding the varieties of percussion instruments. Each of these twenty-five instruments has its imperfections and limitations; each requires a considerable degree of technical skill as well as a high standard of what one can only call intuitive musicianship on the part of the player.

This formidable array of preliminaries is devoted to music for various occasions. The chief of these has always been Celebration and Ritual. At a later period in the history of the art came the first emancipation when music was played or sung for its own sake: Contemplation and Emotional Experience. Allied to these occasions are Music-drama and Opera, which in their turn also arose out of Celebration and Ritual, becoming fully secularised only within comparatively recent times (the sixteenth century). A parallel development is observable when drama and music begin to lead independent existences of their own and purely musical pieces have spoken passages interpolated just as dramatic pieces have Incidental Music, consisting of preludes, interludes, marches, songs and dances.

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## PART II

### VII

#### THE GENESIS OF MUSIC

THE writing of history is no easy task. To attempt to trace the development of any one particular aspect in isolation from its social context leads inevitably to gross errors, as was shown in the section on The Nature of Musical Thought. On the other hand, to take into account all the relevant factors demands not only a considerable scholarly equipment, but requires more detailed treatment than can be accorded to it in a book of this scope. Thus there can be no adequate discussion of many important aspects of musical history, such as developments of musical forms and orchestration, etc.

I propose, therefore, to give no more than a brief conspectus of the salient features of European music. To do this, a convenient method appears to be to examine the main trends of European music to-day, and to trace retrospectively the antecedent causes which produced them.

##### (i) THE CONTEMPORARY SCENE (1943-c. 1910)

The turbulent times in which we are now living are reflected in much of the music that is produced to-day. This is what might be expected. Since it is manifest that society is in a constant state of flux, with an established social system which in one phase is progressively growing and expanding; at a later phase has reached a certain degree of stability; and finally passes into decay, in order to give way to a new progressive system; so, too, do we find analogous movements in music and the arts generally.

An interesting phenomenon, which will be examined later in some detail (see Section VIII, "The Great Schism") is the existing three-fold cleavage between Art-Music, Folk-Music and Commercialised Music.

The Art-Music ("high-brow") which has been produced during these last few years makes its appeal to a circle of cognoscenti, which, under capitalism, is steadily diminishing numerically. It tends to be of a highly complex, remote and ethereal quality; and ultimately becomes a completely private

understood only by the composer himself. A parallel development can be seen in the writings of James Joyce. This phenomenon can be explained, I suggest, by the rejection of the harshness, discomforts and crudities of the external world acting on sensitive people who choose thus to escape and to cut themselves off from the living people. We will return to this kind of music in a moment.

The Folk-Music of to-day is, in the main, the product of the American depressed classes; particularly of the Negroes of the Southern United States. It is noticeable that the highly industrialised parts of the world are barren of such Folk-music.

The town-dwellers have for their musical diet Commercialised Jazz. This product of Tin-Pan Alley is based on the (American) Folk-music which the ruling classes have appropriated from the people. The result is that the form and superficial trappings of style are all that is left; so that it emerges as an anaesthetic, a dope, building dream-worlds of sugary and maudlin romance which in fact deflect people's attention from the realities of the external world. It owes much of its appeal to intensive advertisement ("song-plugging" on the radio) which bludgeons people into acceptance of the metronomic drum-beats and sterile four-square rhythms. There are, however, undoubted reasons other than advertising by repetition for the singular hold which this social product has on the community. These reasons are to be found in the characteristics which are peculiar to the music.

Firstly: the unbroken rhythmical monotony of sixteen, thirty-two or occasionally forty-eight beats, which persist with the inflexibility of a machine, tends to induce in the listener a state akin to hypnosis.

Secondly: the thematic material consists of two or three trite musical formulae \* (the most frequent being tonic-sub-dominant-dominant-tonic) which are basically as impossible to forget as they are, in their embroidered forms, to remember.

\* The fact that any of these dance "numbers" can be conveniently sustained by the two basic and most elementary chords at the disposal of the least accomplished amateur strummer on the ukulele, or other similar instrument, clearly demonstrates the extremely narrow confines of these musical formulae.

Thirdly: the suggestive bodily movements which are evoked by this music demonstrate its strong erotic appeal.

Fourthly: the words sung are invariably either nostalgic, the singer expressing a wish to be somewhere other than he or she is at the moment; or otherwise escapist, by pretending that the love-object is a baby, an angel, a strong hero, or, in fact, anything but the actuality. (See further "The Great Schism," Section VIII.)

In contrast to this three-fold cleavage in the music of the capitalist world, is a new development in the Soviet Union. Here, manifestly, is a social order which, having abolished privileged classes, is on the way to a classless society. As might be expected, therefore, we find in the music of the U.S.S.R. a flourishing Art-Music, co-existing quite amicably with true Popular Music. This popular music is designed primarily to make a mass-appeal, and is suitable for what we in this country call "community-singing," demonstrations and the like. The roots of this music appear to be in the Folk-music indigenous to the various nationalities which comprise the U.S.S.R.

With regard to Art-Music in the U.S.S.R., the foremost composer, in my opinion, is Prokofiev (b. 1891). He left Russia in 1918, and established for himself a world-wide reputation as composer and pianist. In 1933, at the invitation of the Soviet Government, he returned to the U.S.S.R., where he has been ever since. His considerable output includes symphonies and piano concertos. But in the main his interest lies in theatre-music. The reader is recommended to hear the Third Piano Concerto [49] and the delightful children's entertainment, *Peter and the Wolf* [49].

Shostakovich (b. 1906) displays a very considerable talent, which has expressed itself in music of every form [50]. There are also composers such as Maximilian Steinberg (b. 1883), who, incidentally, taught Shostakovich; Khachaturian (b. 1904) [51] and others whose music is not readily accessible in this country.

Dunayevsky (b. 1900) is perhaps the best-known composer of Soviet Popular Music [52].

I do not propose to discuss Soviet music critically with the attention it undoubtedly deserves, beyond saying that it is unquestionably animated and vital in outlook, although one may reasonably say that it is as yet immature in many respects. But it would be a mistake to apply the standards

of European communist society, with its long traditions of differing class-cultures, to music composed in and for a young Socialist State.

The reader must be content with these brief remarks, and allow me to return to the Art-music which is our own social product.

Owing to the facility of international communications, a factor which was touched on in a preceding Section, one derives the impression that more music is being written than at any other period in the world's history. How true this is is hard to estimate. It has always been true that the bulk of music composed has been forgotten owing to its mediocrity. Only the really outstanding works of any generation have been perpetuated. The same doubtless holds good to-day. The difference is that any music written now has to be exceedingly bad of its kind not to achieve some performance somewhere. And that Somewhere is, more often than not, one of the Radio Corporations of the world.

Consequently, although there is no doubt that there is an unparalleled consumption of music to-day, it may be an entirely false idea that there is an unusual productive activity among the younger composers.

In fact, to take the last ten years or so as a moment in time, the very reverse may be true. For one has to take into account the special case of Germany. What is happening in the strictly contemporary scene in Germany is difficult to say. It has been the policy of the German Government to kill, imprison or exile all composers (among other artists, scientists and the like) who were the most highly esteemed by the rest of the world. It would appear that creative musical activity is for the moment at a standstill. (Schönberg left Berlin for the United States voluntarily some years ago; Berg is dead; Hindemith is in the United States; and no one seems to know what has happened to Webern, who was last heard of still in Vienna (November 1939).)

Going back to the older generation, then, we find three main streams in musical development. It is not that it is difficult to disentangle these various currents. But it is difficult to present them with an appearance of simultaneity. Of necessity they must be treated of one by one. I am not writing triple invertible counterpoint now, with all my themes drawn together in a grand *stretto*.

First of all let us recall to mind a very important physical

fact about music; namely, the ~~wrong~~ Mean Temperament. It was pointed out (page 42) that this Mean Temperament reduced to practical absurdity the notion that D flat is a different note from C sharp. The theoretical difference has become a fiction. (In parenthesis, it must be admitted that this difference persists, and persists audibly, on stringed instruments.) Arising out of a realistic attitude to this fact is the disappearance of the ancient predominance of one note, formerly called the Key-note, or Tonic, over any other. Similarly there is no reason other than ingrained habit for allowing any note any degree of precedence over another.

Music, it is held by this school of thought, must henceforth be what is called Atonal—without a tonal centre, or recurring focal point.

#### What is Tonality?

In a few words it may be called a particular Musical Alphabet. As was explained earlier in this book, although the octave is divided into twelve equal parts, composers have not, as a rule, employed the full resources of the entire Chromatic Scale. They limit themselves to a scale consisting of eight, five or some other small number of notes.\* The reason for this was indicated on page 17. Therefore, as long as a piece of music built on one scale (written in one key, as we say) in a general way confines itself to the notes of that scale (or key), it is said to stand in the key of C major, A minor or whatever it may be. This is its Tonality. One of the ways in which composers have sought to introduce a greater variety into their music has been to modulate from one key to another by means of some pivotal point where the inner harmonic sense enables an easy transition to be effected. During the course of an extended movement the music may modulate through a succession of half a dozen keys or more and yet retain the basis of true Tonality. The transitions, or Modulations, from one key to another are explicit and clearly stated.

An indispensable feature of Tonal music is the Cadence, which may be likened to a species of punctuation. There is

\* Any History of Painting will tell you that painters habitually limit the number of pigments on their palettes. No painter uses the entire resources of pigment at one time. This is mentioned as an analogy to the composer's self-imposed limitations of his tonal vocabulary.

music returns from modulatory excursions to the dead-centre of its particular key, and thus enables the composer to keep his Tonality in his head and his audience their feet on the ground.

I can best demonstrate this to those readers who possess a piano with two examples, the first simple, the second more complicated.

Ex. 7

A musical score for piano featuring two staves. The top staff uses a treble clef and the bottom staff uses a bass clef. The key signature changes from one sharp (G major) to no sharps or flats (C major). The score consists of two measures. The first measure shows a progression from G major to C major, with labels 'G maj.' and 'C maj.' below the notes. The second measure is labeled 'Cadence' at the end. The piano keys are indicated below the staff lines.

In this instance it will be seen that the introduction of one note, F natural, leads from the key of G major into the key of C major, where the rest of the passage remains. (The scale of C major consisting entirely of the "white notes" on the piano, F sharp is outside it.)

Ex. 8

A musical score for piano featuring two staves. The top staff uses a treble clef and the bottom staff uses a bass clef. The key signature changes multiple times: from one sharp (G major) to no sharps or flats (C major), then to one flat (A flat major), then to one sharp (G minor), then back to one flat (E flat major). The score consists of four measures. Labels indicate 'G maj.', 'C maj.', 'Ab maj.', 'G min.', 'Cadence', and 'Eb maj.' under specific notes. The piano keys are indicated below the staff lines.

In this second example the second, third and fourth chords provide a series of pivotal points leading finally to E flat major. This elementary example of free and frequent modulation imparts the characteristic of restless Tonality associated with Fauré (1845–1924), and, as we shall see later, with Wolf (1860–1903) and Reger (1873–1916) in Germany still more.

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perament was the abandonment of any sense of a Key-note, or recurring focal point, together with fixed Tonality.

On this theoretical basis of Atonality, which is as good as any other theoretical basis that has obtained in the past, an elaborate structure of musical science has been built.

Arnold Schönberg (*b.* 1874) is the architect of this supremely logical edifice. His prototype may be found in Josquin des Prés (1445–1521), the Netherlands composer and theoretician, out of whose work arose the whole Italian and German Schools of Polyphony, about which we will talk later.

Already from Schönberg's teachings have sprung at least two composers before whom even the most reactionary of critics bows as to a master. These are Anton Webern (*b.* 1883) and Alban Berg (1885–1936). It is unfortunate that of the three, Berg and Webern are the only ones whose representative work is available on gramophone records. The recording of Webern's String Trio [53], opus 20 (erroneously described on the record label as opus 21), is an event of the first importance in the history of recorded music. It is music of rare quality; but, I must warn the reader impatient to rush off to his nearest gramophone dealer, it is not easy to listen to if he has, as is almost inevitable, the Tonic-Dominant pre-possessions of the general run of Europeans. Nevertheless, I advise him to hear this record, and try to put himself in a frame of mind where he is content to allow the magic of the pure beauty of sound to soak into him and flow around him. After several hearings he will surely begin to appreciate the immense musicality of the mind that conceived it. Nevertheless, the fact remains that it is not a work that I would choose for the purpose of introducing the ordinary musical listener to Atonal Music of this variety.

In many ways easier to listen to is the extremely important *Lyric Suite* [54] for String Quartet by Berg.

It is music such as this which has reached the apparent limits of obscurity. It most surely reflects the social attitude of the composer who puts himself as far out of reach of the ordinary run of mankind as is a bunch of grapes for the English working-man at Christmas. In both cases it is the social opportunity for appreciation that is lacking.

The second stream of musical activity is represented by its

a system which has been called Atonal. But he himself repudiates the word as applied to his music. There is, as he points out, a clearly defined tonal centre, or series of tonal centres, in all his music, which is very personal and differs unmistakably from that of the true atonalists in every respect except one. Schönberg and his followers have in common with Hindemith and his imitators—there is a difference between a follower and an imitator—the use they make of the old strict musical forms. Schönberg and Berg on the one side (more than Webern), and Hindemith on the other, frequently cast their music into Fugues, Passacaglias and the like. Hindemith's music is entirely contrapuntal in the same sense that Bach's music is; the music of the atonalists is frequently enriched with pure harmonic embellishment.

The music of Hindemith is considerably more ingratiating and easy on the ear than that of the atonalists proper. This is particularly true of his middle period, the period of the two full-scale operas, the Second Viola Concerto, etc. Latterly, however, it appears to me that he has become dry and academic. The exuberant buoyancy of his quick movements has been displaced by a mechanical dullness; and the elegant tenderness of his slow movements by contrapuntal devices which appear barren of significance or charm. Unfortunately, the only recorded works of Hindemith now available are the Symphony [55], the Second String Trio [56] and a trifling Duet for Viola and 'Cello [57] which he wrote specially for the Columbia History of Music. The early recording of his delightful Third String Quartet is now withdrawn.

Co-existing with these developments is Igor Stravinsky (b. 1882), whose music shows the persistence of tonality; there are only three works of his in which he has abandoned a tonality which is always definite enough to need a key-signature.\* There is a wide choice of works by Stravinsky recorded by various companies [58]. Every one of his works is so individual that I would hesitate to pick out any one and say that it was absolutely representative. I have no space here to write a monograph on the artistic development of this astonishing artist, who is never content to say a thing twice

\* If a piece is written in the key of G major, the note F sharp will constantly recur—never F natural, always F sharp. To save everyone time and trouble the piece accordingly is prefaced by the key-signature of One Sharp—F sharp.

*rightness* have become enfeebled clichés and, one suspects, have developed into an exploitation of the bizarre for its own sake.

These three schools of contemporary music are the main streams in musical thought to-day. The Schönberg School with its doctrinaire system of Atonality; Hindemith with his essentially contrapuntal music with, as one might say, a complex of tonal centres; and Stravinsky, who still adheres to a fixed tonality. Their different kinds of music must be left to speak for themselves—as, indeed, I feel all music should. Ultimately, as I said earlier in this book, either you like it or you don't. If you don't, it does not matter to anyone except in so far as you are the poorer for not being able for this or that reason to appreciate one more thing. Certain it is that no amount of "explanation" will induce you to like certain music, any more than a lecture on dietetics makes you like food that your palate rejects. The most one can say is that, if you are sufficiently interested, you should hear it And hear it again and again and again.

Now from what are these three kinds of music derived, the reader will be asking? We must postpone the answers—for there are several—for the moment. All I can say at this stage in the exposition of my history is that Schönberg derives from the German "Romantics," who will be treated of presently; Hindemith from the German "Classics" (see (iv) (b) below); and Stravinsky from the Great Russians (see (iii) below).

I have purposely and of necessity given considerable space to this review of the Contemporary Scene. But from now on I am compelled drastically to condense the alarming quantity of material which properly requires extended treatment

## (ii) "THE ROMANTICS"

### (a) *The French (1937-c. 1827)*

There is an arbitrary classification of music current among musicians into "Classical" and "Romantic." Like all labels, these have their advantages and their drawbacks. A label is a convenient thing from many points of view. One is apt to

believe that if only one can pin down something by giving it a label, one has somehow come nearer to "the truth." I myself have found this notion frequently misleading, as in the present instance. It is, no doubt, convenient on occasion to be able to label a person Socialist or Conservative. But many Socialists are conservative in some things just as many Conservatives are socialist in some things. The convenience of a label resides in the fact that it tells you something about a person or thing, but the drawback is that it doesn't tell you everything. Thus a composer generally regarded as Romantic may in some respects be Classical.

In any case, it is exceedingly hard to give a working definition of either. Under the heading Classical my dictionary says: "Learned in the Classics, relating to the Classics, conforming to the rules or models of Greek or Latin antiquity (of literature), *hence opposite to Romantic*" (my italics). Turning to Romantic, I find an astonishing congeries of meanings: "Of the nature of or having the qualities of romance in respect of form or content. Characterised by the subordination of form to a theme, and by imagination and passion. Of a fabulous or fictitious character; having no foundation in fact. Imaginary; purely ideal, etc." (*Oxford English Dictionary*.)

From this maze one may extract this: that the Romantic artist in this sense is a type which tends to derive the Form from the Content; and the Classical artist is the opposite.

To this must be added further qualities, qualities of *social outlook*. The Romantic tends towards an exaltation of the individual, towards an escape from reality, towards a purely subjective attitude: he builds dream-worlds of the imagined charms of the idealised past, such as the lamented age of chivalry, the noble sagas of the Irish Kings, or legends of mythological antiquity; conveniently disregarding the extreme personal hazards of ancient days, and the lack of the most elementary of civilised amenities such as electric light and indoor sanitation.

It is less easy to arrive at a closer definition of the Classical composer, as opposed to his Romantic counterpart. Merely to state his attitude in terms of opposition to that of the Romantic is inadequate and even misleading: for it would be in no sense true to suggest that he dwells lovingly on the beauties of gas-works and sewers. I incline to the general statement that the Classical composer has an attitude of

the attainment of his individuality by the paradoxical means of identifying himself with the social world at large.

The matter is further complicated by the fact, indicated above, that the two types do not conveniently fit into one category or the other. But two clearly opposed examples may clarify this: Mozart the Classical, Wagner the Romantic. With Mozart the formal structure in which he casts his ideas plays an integral and decisive part in the ideas themselves. With Wagner the importance of the germ-idea, the isolated moment of sound, is stressed; and out of the material the musical form grows and develops. It may justifiably be said that only too often it swells unmanageably and boils over until the audience is swamped in an inchoate and amorphous welter.

With Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) the last trickle of French Romanticism dried up. In addition to the recorded works already mentioned (*Daphnis and Chloe* [25] and *The Enchanted Flute* [59] from Schéhérazade), the reader is referred to the String Quartet [60] and the lovely early piano piece *Jeux d'Eau* [61].

The apex of the French Romantics was Claude Debussy (1862-1918). The common forefather of both was Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924). Debussy's *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune* [24] has already been cited. There are in addition numerous piano pieces, such as the two books of Preludes and the little-known Studies [62], which will delight every listener.

Behind Ravel and Debussy is an array of names of the French Romantics, many of whom are not in vogue at the moment, but whose intrinsic qualities will reassert themselves in time. Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924), Jules Massenet (1842-1912), Alexis Emmanuel Chabrier (1841-1894) are among them. Nor must one forget Erik Satie (1866-1925), contemporary with Debussy, whose formative influence was felt outside the music of his own country. To conclude the list, let us mention Georges Bizet (1838-1875), César Franck (1822-1890), and the progenitor of them all, Hector Berlioz (1803-1869).

So far as it is possible to consider the music of these French Romantics under a single heading, it may be said that it is characterised by a lightness and sparkle, a directness of approach and of expression, which are qualities peculiar to the genius of the French in all their manifestations. This

lightness is not levity nor mere emptiness. It is an buoyancy which is as unmistakably French as is language.

That singular figure Erik Satie (1866-1925) was among first to take more than an antiquarian interest in and music of the kind popularly called Gregorian Chant (althe Pope Gregory had nothing to do with it at all). He rev the simplicity of this ancient mode of writing music by ba many of his own works directly on the old Church Mod and by employing a harmonic scheme of bare fourths and fifths in place of the discordant lusciousness of thirds and sixths which had held sway for four centuries. Satie's whimsicality was a great obstacle to his acceptance by the general musical public as a serious composer. But it would be mistake to assess his worth only by these eccentricities. His truly musical influence was a very real and important thing although he himself remained in poverty and obscurity for most of his life. He may be said to have heralded the movement known as Neo-Classical, which assumed a considerable prominence after the last war. (Although Saint-Saëns must not be overlooked in this connection. There is at least one most peculiar "Neo-Classical" work of his, the Septet for string quartet, double-bass, trumpet and piano, which sheer perversity outmatches the most precious of the young French composers.)

Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924) was a composer of great distinction and real refinement. Among other features that his music possesses is a remarkable harmonic richness with which associated kaleidoscopic tonality-sequences. Unfortunately no important mature work appears to be available on the gramophone.

There is no space at my disposal for dealing with the other representatives of the French Romantics as I should wish. It must suffice to instance typical examples so that the listener can hear for himself the kind of music they wrote. All I can hope to do is to attempt to relate this with the main stream of musical development.

I will therefore typify the remaining French Romantics as follows: Massenet (1842-1912) can be represented by "En m'ent les yeux" from *Manon* [63]; Chabrier (1841-1894) by "Spanish Rhapsody" [64]; Bizet (1838-1875) by *L'Arlesienne* [1]; Franck (1822-1890) by *Prelude, Chorale and Fugue* [65];

\* See page 19.

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See page 19.

and Berlioz (1803–1869) by the *Symphonie Fantastique* [38] and the *Carnaval Romain* [41], already mentioned.

We cannot, however, afford to dismiss Berlioz so briefly. As with most great composers, an immense controversy (which, by the way, is not yet dead) has raged over and around him for close on a hundred years. His music has the vital and dynamic urge to it that still can disconcert listeners to-day by the genius for the bizarre and unexpected which it betrays. His orchestration was startling in its innovations and richness. The influence he exerted over his followers, more even than over his contemporaries, was immense. Liszt (1811–1886), that other great fertiliser of musical genius, owed much to him, as did Wagner (1813–1883). These two recorded examples of his works must suffice for the listener to draw his own conclusions as to the ultimate worth of the progenitor of the French Romantics.

A parenthesis must be made here, since it is outside the scope of this book to provide a proper context, for mention of Chopin (1810–1849), Polish son of a French-born father. He was a virtuoso composer (if I may use the expression) for the piano; and his influence on music for that instrument is certainly comparable to that exerted by his friends Liszt (1811–1886) and Schumann (1810–1856), and may be held by some to be even greater.

#### (b) *The German* (1943–c. 1800)

The German Romantics present a very different picture. Their latest manifestation in the Schönberg School is one of those bewildering instances of the inadequacy of labels. It is true to say that Alban Berg was a Romantic. It is also true to say that he was a Classical composer. In so far as he was a Romantic he presents as perfect an example of that approach to his art as can well be found in modern times: the surging harmonic richness, the use of small motives and patterns of sound to build up his edifice, the choice of subject for his operatic works. On the other hand, he also, and in the same works, employs the Classical approach of fitting his material to the strict musical forms of the Passacaglia, the Fugue and so on. And yet withal he contrives to achieve an integration which in no way produces a sense of incongruity such as one might expect to arise from this duality. The same may be said of Webern. I should be hard put to it to ascribe to either this or that emphasis. To sum up, I should say that

Schoenberg, Webern and Berg achieve a synthesis of the Romantic and the Classical hitherto unknown in the history of music.

We turn now to the immediate forefathers of the Schönberg School. The period of the German Romantic School covers about a hundred-and-fifty years—from the present-day representatives to about 1800. During this time a lot happened.

First: Reger (1873–1911), a composer of great historical significance. His music displays an astounding proliferation, a wild and seemingly ungovernable exfoliation, which obscures itself in penumbrous harmonic implications. Besides this, there is in his music a most important and significant thing: his tonality. It is chaotic. Key-signatures change every few bars, so that it is impossible for the listener to unravel the maze of kaleidoscopic changes. Bewilderment and exhaustion rapidly set in. With infinite skill one arrives at, say, C sharp, only to find the composer leaving it as if it were D flat. An immense harmonic and melodic subtlety is built up on these lines, a subtlety so elusive that there are many moments when it is obvious that the composer himself gets entangled in his own ingenuity of tortuous thought and no longer knows what he is doing. It was this chaos which was systematised by Schönberg. Reger was feeling his way to it, but was not big enough—or the times were not ripe—to sweep aside the tonal prejudices to which he was heir and co-ordinate on a rational basis the evident disappearance of Tonality which he sensed but could not formulate.

A parallel development was going on in France at about the same time, as has already been hinted, with Fauré, thirty years older than Reger. With the Frenchman, however, the restless Tonality never became unmanageable. There is about Fauré a refinement and distinction which no German, whatever his virtues, could ever achieve. The reader is recommended to hear Reger's Scherzo from the String Quartet in E flat major, opus 109 [66], to appreciate his importance.

Mahler (1860–1911), who achieved immense fame as a conductor all over the world, was the last representative of the great Viennese tradition of big symphonists, a tradition inherited from Bruckner and Schubert. The time may come when the world will be ready for a revival of his works. They are all conceived on a vast scale. There are nine symphonies, most of them with solo singers and chorus. The

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Eighty Symphony requires one thousand performers. An example of his music in a small form is accessible on the gramophone: *Ich atmet' einen linden Duft* [67]. It is interesting, by the way, to compare this with the early Schönberg song on the other side of the record from *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten* [68], published a dozen years after the Mahler song just quoted.

The monumental figure of Wagner (1811–1883) dominated his epoch, and still occupies the exclusive attention of many music-lovers to-day, even if he was the progenitor of much that was worthless in the so-called Neo-Wagnerians. I am not suggesting that he is a figure which can or should be disregarded. His music-dramas epitomise the many attempts to weld the three arts of drama, music and decoration into a true unity. And it must be conceded that his was no vain attempt, as has been unkindly suggested, to homogenise oil, beer and water. In any case his music, or quite enough of it, will be so familiar to every reader, whether he likes it or not, that it would be merely redundant to intrude with professed selections. Wagner's influence is discernible for thirty years after his death in 1883.

I might here interpolate that when considering the German Romantics the first attribute that strikes one is the love of what they call the Kolossal. The glorification of sheer size, bulk, mass and weight has been a particularly German characteristic, especially since 1871, when the Germans became conscious of themselves as a Nation, united by ties of Blood, Race, Language; and with a Mission, a Divine Mission, to impose their Culture on the rest of the unwilling world, which felt not a little frightened (when it was not amused at what seemed to it mere bombast) at this monstrous eruption.

In common with the rest of his countrymen of the period, Wagner was under the spell of the virtue of size. The opening of a Wagner music-drama, say the first three or four hours, is tolerable. But thereafter only the hardiest can survive.

But unquestionably the biggest figure in the nineteenth century was the Hungarian-born Liszt (1811–1886). During his long life his astoundingly fertile brain poured forth music in all forms. He was, among other things, the inventor of the Symphonic Poem, a form which was fastened on by his contemporaries and successors alike. The Symphonic Poem is a

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Development of Programme Music carried to its uttermost extreme.

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It has been the subject of much wrangling in the past between those who favour it as an artistic expression and those who insist on its opposite, Absolute Music. Absolute Music has no other object than the realisation of beauty in terms of pure sound. Programme Music, on the other hand, relies considerably for its appeal on literary associations. In the simplest instance a mere label, such as Debussy used for his Piano Preludes, is intended to set the mood of the piece—although it is important to know in this connection that Debussy gave titles to his pieces after they were written and not before. Full-dress Programme Music, however, is altogether more ambitious. A more or less complicated story is attached to the piece. In Strauss's Symphonic Poems *Ein Heldenleben* [69] and *Till Eulenspiegel* [30] the listener is presented with complete biographies illustrated by the music. A wealth of ingenuity is expended by the composer in portraying minute incidents in his heroes' lives. The proper place for this sort of thing is really the cinema.

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To return to Liszt, who began all this: his influence extended to the Russian composers, who were coming into being at that time. He animated Chopin and Berlioz, Wagner and Schumann came under his sway. His prodigies of pianism amazed the world. It is unfortunate that he is to-day generally known only by his lesser works, such as the Hungarian Rhapsodies for piano, which have been "arranged" for every conceivable combination of instruments. But the things by which he will live as a composer are the big symphonic works, the two piano concertos, and the piano sonata.

(A striking parallel with this singular genius came in later times with Busoni (1866-1924), an enigmatic composer, a pianist of fantastic virtuosity, who permeated the musical life of his time in precisely the same way as did Liszt. He is too

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important a figure not to mention, at the same time difficult to assess as a composer. All the machinery of music is present. There is nothing that that man did not know. Listening to his music one gets carried away by the brilliance of conception and the amazing musical intellect. But every musician of to-day will admit that he remains an enigma. We leave him with a question mark, bracketed with his prototype.)

Both Schumann (1810–1856) and Schubert (1797–1828) contributed notably to chamber music and to the symphony. The former is known chiefly by his piano works, the latter by his superb Lieder. The world would undoubtedly be the poorer without their music; but neither was distinguished as the founder or the apex of any particular school or movement.

Weber (1786–1826) is a figure whose importance can scarcely be exaggerated. His influence touched every sphere of music: orchestration, the development of the variation form, the technique of piano playing, the development of German opera, and, above all, the rich fertility of his new and advanced ideas. In addition to all this, he was a magnificent conductor. There is no space to deal adequately with him here. We must be content with pointing out his greatest achievement: the popularising of native opera in Germany, which up to that time had been overrun by Italian composers and artists. It was not until late in his short life that he achieved the fame he deserved. It was the performance in Berlin of his opera *Der Freischütz* [70], which took him three years to compose, that finally established his fame beyond all question. Thereafter his success was immense wherever he went. Unparalleled acclamation followed the composer, culminating in his visit to London for the production of his opera *Oberon* [71], which had been specially commissioned by Covent Garden Royal Opera House (in parenthesis, imagine a composer being commissioned for a work by that ancient institution to-day); and there he died. A plaque on the house where he stayed while in London may be seen in Portland Place to this day. Among his other activities was the writing of many *pièces d'occasion*, ephemeral music, as the composer well knew, but done with all the craftsmanship and sincerity which he put into his other enduring and more important works. As will be pointed out later in the Section on The Great Schism, Weber was about

symphonies and operas to popular songs and waltzes. Then after composers, performers and audiences divided themselves into black and white sheep: the devotees of "serio" or "classical" music and the addicts of "popular" or "light" music. But this is not the place to anticipate what I am going to say later.

It may be argued that Beethoven (1770-1827), like I (1685-1750), was in the main a traditionalist. It may be said that Beethoven is distinguished chiefly by reason of development of the eighteenth-century style; whereas Weber, who was only sixteen years younger, was an innovator. There is a great deal of truth in this. On the other hand, the works of Beethoven which have had the greatest significance for posterity have been those of his later maturity—big piano sonatas and the four last string quartets. Not I in any way belittle the symphonies. But they are all classical models, developed, it is true, to a perfection of form and content greater than had been achieved before. They were, nevertheless, classical in structure and outline. With his later works, on the other hand, we see the beginning of the Romantic Movement. Particularly is this true of the posthumous quartets. I do not mean to give the impression that this was a sudden development. The germ of it was latent from the middle period onwards. It was Beethoven that must be ascribed the dawn of the Romantic Movement with all its fruitful, and in some respects disastrous, consequences.

### (iii) THE GREAT RUSSIANS (1908-c. 1830)

Once more we must rely largely on recorded music to give us an impression of that curious phenomenon, the rise of the Great Russian Composers. Curious, because music in Russia erupted as suddenly with Glinka (1803-1857) as did literature with Pushkin (1799-1837). Were this more than the briefest outline of musical history, it would be proper to relate all these musical developments which we are discussing to the other artistic, scientific and social events of the world in which they took place. As it is, this partial study must be left to some other full-length book, such a subject deserves.

For practical purposes the last and present representation

of Russian Music is Stravinsky (b. 1882), whom we have discussed at some length already.

We must in this Section turn our attention to his immediate predecessors, assuming (as I do with every composer mentioned) that the reader has, through the medium of the gramophone, become familiar with his work so that he can see from what it derived.

We begin, then, with Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908). There is here a direct connection between cause and effect: Stravinsky was one of his pupils. His first works are saturated with influences of the master, as may be seen in *Fireworks* (often heard at Promenade Concerts), *The Nightingale* [58] and *The Firebird* [58]. Rimsky-Korsakov had the superb (and justified) effrontery to write a book on orchestration illustrated by examples from his own works. He, in common with most of the Russian composers, was an amateur musician in a very real, and by no means derogatory, sense. He was in the navy. Cui (1835-1918) was in the army. Borodin (1834-1887) was a chemist. Tchaikovsky (1840-1893) and Mussorgsky (1835-1881) must be singled out for special mention; the former for his symphonic and theatre music, the latter particularly for his operas.

Individual though all of the Russian composers are, they have in common a peculiar richness of flavour derived from the native quasi-barbaric music upon which so much of their work was founded. The different provinces of old Russia were found to have an immense store of folk-music which was collected assiduously by its discoverers and made the basis of Art-music. The Russian musical genius has shown itself mostly in the form of operas, ballets and symphonic poems, the stories of which were taken direct from historical events or local legends. All of this music was late in becoming known to the outside world. Its importation into Europe was due to a few ardent enthusiasts in the first decade of this century. The impact of this wild and exciting new music seems to have been terrific, although I am too young to have witnessed it. The music sprang from Russia and has remained Russian. The tunes themselves are vigorous and simple, gaining much of their effect from short phrases reiterated time and time again.

In parenthesis, it may be pointed out that this extreme Russian nationalism has never proved a limitation in the sense that the nationalism of Spanish music has. In pre-

cisely the same way all Spanish Art-music is founded upon national traditions. So much have Spanish composers insisted on this narrow nationalism that it would be scarcely too much to say that full appreciation of Spanish music is limited to the Spanish. Naturally everyone can respond to the seduction of the more obvious features, such as the idiosyncratic measure of the national dances like the Tango and the sound of the castanets. But I am sure that no one but a Spaniard knowing the cultural life of his own community can fully understand the implications of Spanish music derived from allusions to the *flamenco* and other national musical features.

Nevertheless, Russian music remains in a sense an isolated phenomenon. Until comparatively recently it cannot be said to have had an influence on the general musical stream comparable to the influence of the novels of, say, Dostoievsky. There is no space to do more than cite examples of recorded music.

Rimsky-Korsakov (1844-1908): Bridal Cortège from *Le Coq d'Or* [72]; Scriabin (1871-1915): *Le Poème d'Extase* [73]; Tchaikovsky (1840-1893): *Casse Noisette Suite* [40]; Balakirev (1836-1910): *Thamar* [74]; Mussorgsky (1835-1881): Coronation Scene from *Boris Godunov* [75]; Cui (1835-1918): *Kaléidoscope* [76]; Borodin (1834-1887): *Polovtsi March* from *Prince Igor* [77]; Glinka (1803-1857): Overture to *Russlan and Ludmila* [78].

#### (iv) "THE CLASSICS"

##### (a) *The French (c. 1860-c. 1950)*

We now return to the main development of music in Europe. We broke off our study of the French Romantics with Berlioz (1803-1869).

At this point we are confronted once more by the difficulty of classification. Are the composers whom we are about to consider "Romantic" or "Classical" in their outlook? The most cursory examination shows that the first half-dozen of them do not conveniently fit into either category. But I must insist once more that labels are conveniences. We must remember that it is we who tie on the labels: we must not be tied by them, and commit the mistake of trying to force every composer into this or that category without realising that we place them there purely as a matter of convenience and not from a conviction that they necessarily and truly belong.

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According to my interpretation, then, the immediate precursors of Berlioz were transitional between the Classical and the Romantic Schools proper. They were traditionalists in so far as they largely accepted many of the Classical conventions, and they broke new ground in so far as they looked forward, unconsciously, if you like, to the Romantics who were to follow them.

In the first place we must mention two foreign invasions which exercised formative influences on the musical destiny of France. One of these invasions came from Germany in the persons of Meyerbeer (1791-1864) and Gluck (1714-1787); the other from Italy, consisting of an influx of Rossini (1792-1868) and Cherubini (1760-1842). It will be seen from a comparison of the dates of these composers that they could not all have come at once. Meyerbeer and Rossini were contemporaries: Cherubini was a generation older; and Gluck nearly a century before them.

In the second place, there were the truly French composers of this period: Halévy (1799-1862), Auber (1782-1871), Boieldieu (1775-1834) and Méhul (1763-1817).

All of these composers, the foreigners who visited or settled in France and the native products, were primarily composers of opera. Of purely instrumental music it seems that there was during this time a partial eclipse.

I will select as representative of this transitional period Hérold's overture to *Zampa* [79], which is unfortunately an old recording. But this, as well as the earliest, period of music is badly served by the gramophone companies.

We turn now to what are perhaps the three greatest names in this period of French musical history: Rameau (1683-1764), Couperin (1668-1733) and Lully (1639-1687).

Rameau (1683-1764) was a prodigy. He early turned his attention to musical theory, and among his most important contributions in this field was his discovery of what are termed the Inversions of Chords. That is to say, he was the first to lay down that the chords E-G-C and G-C-E are really only the First and Second Inversions of the one chord C-E-G, which is its "Root Position."

#### Ex. 9

The diagram illustrates three inversions of a C major chord (C-E-G) on a treble clef staff. The first inversion has E as the root note (bass). The second inversion has G as the root note (bass). The third inversion (not shown) would have C as the root note (bass). The bass line is indicated by a vertical line with arrows pointing downwards, and the bass notes are circled.

This is a thing that every musical child of twelve knows to-day, just as he is conversant with the salient truth of our solarcentric system. Nevertheless, this discovery of Rameau's was of an importance in its own way comparable to Galileo's. In the purely creative sphere Rameau produced much harpsichord music of great charm and considerable importance, although principally he devoted himself to opera and ballet.

The reader is recommended to hear the delightful record of his *Le Tambourin* [80].

Between c. 1660 and 1850 there were five generations of musicians in the Couperin family, comparable in this respect to the Bachs, whom we will come across in the next Section (p. 126). François Couperin (1668–1733), called Couperin le Grand, was famous as a composer for the harpsichord. He has the further distinction of being one of the early writers of Programme Music, which often bore the most whimsical titles.

The only recorded music is in the volume of harpsichord music issued by the Couperin Society [81].

The name of Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) was originally spelt Lulli, the composer being Italian by birth but French by adoption (in romantic and probably discreditable circumstances connected with a fancy of the Duc de Guise) in early boyhood. He was in many ways an adventurer and an unscrupulous scoundrel. But musically he was of the greatest importance, not only to France but to the rest of Europe as well. He is regarded as the founder of French opera; he established the form of the French Overture, a form which immediately popularised itself and endured for generations, and introduced many original ideas which we have no space to deal with here. He died from an abscess in the big toe caused by hitting himself with a baton while conducting his *Te Deum*. The quality of his music, so alive to-day, can be estimated from a single record which contains the Prelude to *Alceste*, the March from *Thésée* and the Notturno from *Le Triomphe de l'Amour* [82].

Let us pause here to consider the main trend of what had been happening to music in France during this long period of roughly two hundred years.

Those composers whom I designated above as the transitionalists between the Classical School and the later Romantics I represented by Hérold's Overture to *Zampa* [79]. In the early, the truly Classical period, one can trace how the first Romantics such as Berlioz (1803–1869) very clearly arose

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were tempered with the poetic outlook of Couperin (1668–1733), coloured though they were by the second German and Italian invasions. Properly to estimate the position and importance of Lully, the progenitor, we shall have to wait until we see what was happening between the Paris School (which flourished from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries) and his own period in the latter part of the seventeenth century.

(b) *The German* (c. 1790–c. 1740)

Everyone knows the names, and most people are familiar with the music, of the first two of the four composers whom I have selected to represent this present period. For that reason I will not spend much time on them.

To begin with, I should like to draw attention to the similarities to be found between the earlier music of Beethoven (1770–1827), whose period we have just discussed, and the later music of Mozart (1756–1791) and of Haydn (1732–1809). I suggest that this still absolutely "Classical" music reveals in its later manifestations of Beethoven's latter years the unmistakable transition to the "Romantic." One can follow the lessening of the stylised rigidity until a new appearance of spontaneity shows itself, undisguised (if you like) by the same amount, or the same kind, of artifice which is so characteristic of the purely Classical Music.

One other feature deserves mention: the extreme simplicity of the music of Mozart and Haydn. This simplicity is in some ways more apparent than real. But even in the celebrated *Jupiter Symphony* of Mozart there is no complexity of idea or structure comparable to the late Beethoven.

This point needs elaborating somewhat. Let us jump forward a hundred and seventy years to to-day. All the music I cited in the Section on the Contemporary Scene (page 104) is in its various ways complex both in content and, often, in the mode of its expression.\* In the few years immediately following the First World War—things happen quickly nowadays—there was a brief return to simplicity following the

\* This is extremely liable to be misunderstood. I am not impugning any of the composers mentioned of deliberate obscurantism by wrapping up their thoughts in difficult language. It is implicit that one cannot use for one's ideas vehicles which have already done service to an earlier generation; for which reason no one to-day would dream of writing plays in Shakespearean blank verse or of writing a Bach fugue.

turgidities of the first decade of this century and the last decade of the preceding one. This turgidity and complexity may be regarded as a reaction from the lightness and simplicity of the French Romantics, or in part a continuation and apogee of the German Romantics from late Beethoven onwards. Both interpretations are in my view correct.

And now in the German Classics at present under discussion we see once more the recognition of the virtues of simplicity.

(I hope that the reader will bear with me for selecting these terms Complexity and Simplicity. Without devoting to the point considerably more space than is at my disposal, I cannot adequately protect myself from attack. I can but plead that it is, as always, the reader's business to try to understand what I am trying to say, and my business to try to say what I want as clearly and as concisely as possible. If one of us fails in this, you will put the book down in disgust. But if, finally, I say that in this connection I give as examples of Complexity the Schönberg School, the Wagnerians and German Romantics generally; and as examples of Simplicity the French Romantics such as Boieldieu and the German Classics such as Mozart and Haydn, you should at least see what I mean, even if you do not agree with the labels.)

To return to the similarity between Haydn and early Beethoven. Compare these two records: the Finale of Symphony No. 104 in D major by Haydn [83] and the Finale of the First Symphony in C major by Beethoven [84]. But there is one important difference at least: and that is, that the Romantic later Beethoven was implicit in the Classical early Beethoven, whereas there is no trace of it in Haydn—or, for that matter, in Mozart.

The remaining composer of this period is one of Bach's twenty children, Johann Christian (1735–1782), who already heralded this Simplicity, as a reaction from the terrific contrapuntal complexity of the previous generations, of which his father was the incomparable apex.

His Sinfonia in B flat major [85] shows the influence he had on Mozart.

Finally, Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787), whose greatest operas, despite that he was a German, were Italian and French, may be represented by the Dance of the Blessed Spirits from *Orpheus* [86].

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The remaining composer of this period is one of Bach's twenty children, Johann Christian (1735–1782), who already heralded this Simplicity, as a reaction from the terrific contrapuntal complexity of the previous generations, of which his father was the incomparable apex.

His Sinfonia in B flat major [85] shows the influence he had on Mozart.

Finally, Christoph Willibald Gluck (1714–1787), whose greatest operas, despite that he was a German, were Italian and French, may be represented by the Dance of the Blessed Spirits from *Orpheus* [86].

(v) THE ITALIAN OPERA (c. 1920-c. 1750)

One of the most fertilising influences in European music has been Italian Opera, which, throughout its long history, has permeated Germany, France and England in turn. And in every case it has proved a stimulus to the creation of a form of national opera in the countries concerned. The last great figure of the Italians in this sphere was Puccini (1858-1924), a master of stagecraft and a composer of remarkable invention. In this country his opera *La Bohème* [87] is probably the most popular, although his last work, *Turandot* [88], may well be considered of greater importance.

His predecessor, Verdi (1813-1901), was not exclusively a composer of opera as was Puccini. His *Requiem* [89] is in every way as notable as the operas by which he is best known, *Aida* and *Rigoletto* [90]. It may be mentioned that he exercised considerable influence in France.

Donizetti (1797-1848) and Rossini (1792-1868) were also instrumental in fertilising French opera. In the French music of the period can be clearly seen how the music of these two Italians, who spent so much time in France, influenced the course of events. The light sparkle and vivacity, the use of dramatic musical moments when an abrupt and wholly unexpected chord interrupts the trickling flow of melody, are features borrowed from the Italians.

The first name in this period of the development of Italian Opera is Piccinni (1728-1800). Around him and the German Gluck (1714-1787) arose one of those storms of partisanship which are such diverting features of musical history. Those, one says to oneself, were the days when people really cared for music. Those were the days when rival factions, each acclaiming that his favourite composer was the only one of any importance and the other a second-rate hack demonstrated in theatres, cafés and streets, and even went to the length of free fights. In our times there have been disturbances at concerts and theatres by members of the audience who did not care for what they were listening to: the first performance of Webern's String Trio at the International Festival of Contemporary Music in Siena (1928) and of Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* [23] in Paris in 1913 were nearly wrecked by the "antis." I may even be permitted to add that the police had to be sent for during a concert of my own works in London in 1927. But there has been no rival-

between composers comparable to the Gluck-Piccinni race. In so far as such enthusiastic feelings are indices of intensity of emotion and enjoyment, this lack of partisanship is to be deplored.

It will be seen, or rather heard, from the examples cited above that operatic music has tended to become ever more elaborately anecdotal and illustrative, in conformity with the development of Programme Music. Richness of effect and of effects has in nearly every case been the ultimate achievements of contemporary opera. Exceptions are to be found in deliberate returns to the older aesthetic idea of formalisation as in much of Hindemith's operatic music and in Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*, for example. But in the main it is true to say that no action on the stage can pass unnoticed by the music: in the orchestra clocks strike, bells ring and doors open and close with the most ingenious onomatopoeic noises. So we can trace this development from Piccinni, whose music was still cast into formal movements the sequences of which were dictated by an elaborate operatic convention, which laid down that after a chorus a solo recitative must come, and this in turn must be followed by an aria. And so on. But even in Piccinni the germs of musical dramatisation are already well developed. They needed but to be elaborated to reach their full efflorescence with Puccini.

Here, for the moment, we will leave Italian opera as such and pass to consideration of things in other countries.

#### (vi) THE ENGLISH SCHOOL (1943-c. 1100)

It is no concern of mine to push home products. That task can quite comfortably be left to others. We can glance at contemporary activity in this country, and pass on. It does not appear that there is to-day in England any music of significance as far as the big issues and long historical view of the art as a whole are concerned. English Music remains parochial, despite the irresistible infiltration of Continental influences. In a country where peasant costumes and traditions are long since dead, and folk-music is kept precariously alive in the hothouses of the English Folk Dance Society, it cannot be expected that a national tradition on these lines should continue to exist as a vital thing. Ironically enough, insular England was, if only by reason of its Empire and overseas connections generally, the first nation whose people became Citizens of the World. The manifest reluctance of

many people to accept this plain fact has resulted in trouous consequences in almost every sphere. Musically, this resistance has resulted in a great deal of theological chialism mentioned above as well as ill-digested ac from foreign sources. Music, I maintain, is as interesting as Science. And no one, surely, is so misguided as to think that some particular virtue resides in British Science despite the fact that Science has in this country an unbroken heritage of generations of scientific thought when England have been among the leaders of the world. This has been the case with Music, which suffered a sorry eclipse for the better part of a hundred years.

The spectacular expansion of British imperialist-ca in the latter half of the nineteenth century imbue artists of the day with the most romantic notions of the civilising mission of our Island Race. There was a new crusade, aptly expressed in Kipling's slogan, "The Man's Burden." The spirit of this and the chauvinists of Sir Henry Newbolt provided incentives for heroic sagas such as Sir Charles Stanford's *Songs of the Fleet*. Hubert Parry's *Jerusalem*, and similar works were performed on weekdays, nicely balanced by pious exercises to requirements of the one-day-a-week religion of the workers. In this latter connection the first and last verses (of seven in all) of Hymn 584 from *Hymns Ancient & Modern*, Standard Edition, 1869, are worth quoting as an illustration of the degradation and cynicism of the official religious period, which lent itself with every appearance of willingness to the task of perpetuating the social conditions on which our imperial prosperity was founded. The dynamic markings ("expression marks") should be noticed:

*For a Service for Working Men—Hymn 5*

*mf* Sons of Labour, dear to Jesus,  
To your homes and work again;  
*cresc.* Go with brave hearts back to duty,  
*dim.* Face the peril, bear the pain;  
*p* Be your dwellings ne'er so lowly,  
*cresc.* Yet remember by your bed  
*mf* That the SON of GOD most holy  
*dim.* Had not where to lay His head.

*mf* Sons of Labour, live for JESUS,  
Be your work your worship too;  
In His Name, and to His Glory,  
Do whate'er you find to do,  
Till this night of sin and sorrow  
Be for ever overpast,  
*f* And we see the golden morrow,  
Home with JESUS, home at last!

This was the emotional and intellectual colouring of the period. It is only just to say that the music is entirely lacking in distinction.

Nevertheless, the resuscitation of music in this country, though not comparable with the efflorescence produced by the Elizabethan merchant-adventurers, was begun by Sir Hubert Parry (1848–1918) and made a reality by Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1935). Important though the effects of this revival have been for this country, no composer of international consequence has as yet been thrown up.

Vaughan Williams (*b.* 1872), Arnold Bax (*b.* 1883), E. J. Moeran (*b.* 1894), and John Ireland (*b.* 1879) are, nevertheless, notable figures in English music [91]. And, of the younger generation, William Walton (*b.* 1902), Constant Lambert (*b.* 1905) and Benjamin Britten (*b.* 1912) have achieved considerable reputations which extend to every country where contemporary music is played [92].

Our last composer may be said to be Dr. Arne (1710–1778). In the interim England was inundated by a flood of Händelian and Italian Opera, whose tide the national produce was not sufficiently vigorous to withstand. The operas of Arne number over thirty. The songs, "Blow, blow, thou winter wind" and "Under the greenwood tree" from *As You Like It* [93] are worth hearing.

Prior to Arne was a number of great figures, among them Dr. Blow (1648–1708) and Henry Purcell (1658–1695). The music of Blow is unfortunately not readily accessible. He was a voluminous composer of anthems, songs and harpsichord music.

Henry Purcell (1658–1695) was in every way a more important figure. He is generally regarded as the flower of English composers, although until lately his works have been strangely neglected. A Purcell Society has been formed, however, and now many of his most important works are

many people to accept this plain fact has resulted in disastrous consequences in almost every sphere. Musically speaking, this resistance has resulted in a great deal of the parochialism mentioned above as well as ill-digested accretions from foreign sources. Music, I maintain, is as international a Science. And no one, surely, is so misguided as to suppose that some particular virtue resides in British Science as such, despite the fact that Science has in this country an unbroken heritage of generations of scientific thought when Englishmen have been among the leaders of the world. This has not been the case with Music, which suffered a sorry eclipse for the better part of a hundred years.

The spectacular expansion of British imperialist-capitalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century imbued many artists of the day with the most romantic notions of the vilising mission of our Island Race. There was a new kind of crusade, aptly expressed in Kipling's slogan, "The White Man's Burden." The spirit of this and the chauvinistic poems Sir Henry Newbolt provided incentives for heroic musical gas such as Sir Charles Stanford's *Songs of the Fleet*. This, Sir Hubert Parry's *Jerusalem*, and similar works were performed on weekdays, nicely balanced by pious exercises to suit the requirements of the one-day-a-week religion of the well-to-do. In this latter connection the first and last verses (there are seven in all) of Hymn 584 from *Hymns Ancient & Modern*, Standard Edition, 1869, are worth quoting as an indication of the degradation and cynicism of the official religion of the period, which lent itself with every appearance of willingness to the task of perpetuating the social conditions on which its imperial prosperity was founded. The dynamic markings ("expression marks") should be noticed:

*For a Service for Working Men—Hymn 584*

*mf* Sons of Labour, dear to Jesus,  
To your homes and work again;  
*cresc.* Go with brave hearts back to duty,  
*dim.* Face the peril, bear the pain;  
*p* Be your dwellings ne'er so lowly,  
*cresc.* Yet remember by your bed  
*mf* That the SON of GOD most holy  
*dim.* Had not where to lay His head.

available on the gramophone, among them his celebrated opera *Dido and Aeneas* [94]. But his *Rejoice in the Lord Alway* [95], from the Columbia History of Music, should also be heard.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries constitute the real period of English music. From the large number of composers whose work has come down to us I have room here to mention only a few outstanding names, such as Orlando Gibbons [44] (1583-1625), Thomas Weelkes [44] (157?-1623), John Dowland [96] (1563-1626), John Bull (c. 1562-1628), Thomas Morley [44] (1558-1603), William Byrd (1538-1623) and Thomas Tallis (1527-1585). All of these were composers of madrigals and writers for the lute. Musically, as in many other ways, it was indeed a Golden Age for England, when her composers were known and famed all over Europe.

We must leave this subject asking questions about anonymous composers, many of whose works even have been lost and forgotten. John Dunstable (d. 1453) appears as a shadowy figure. References to him are to be found in French writings of the period. All that is certain is that by inference there must have been a flourishing and important school of English composers long before this time. Reference has already been made to the monk John Fornsete (fl. 1226), who is supposed to have been the composer of *Summer is Icumen In* [14]. It is impossible to suppose that a work of such complexity should suddenly have emerged without native ancestors. Also the name of John Odington, who is known to have flourished in 1280 and to have died in 1316, is unmistakably English; although it is known that he lived most of his life in France, where records show him to have been famed as a great English composer.

It is always possible that further research will in time bring these early stars in our musical firmament to light once more. Certainly the music of these early times which has survived destruction in wars and revolutions, the Dissolution of the Monasteries and later enthusiasms of the Puritans, is sufficiently alive to-day to make such researches valuable for posterity.

#### (vii) THE EARLY GERMANS (1750-c. 1650)

And now we go back to Germany, which took up so much time and space a little while ago.

We start with the father of the two Bachs, Johann Chris-

tian (1735–1782) and Carl Philipp Emanuel (1714–1788), whom we mentioned them. Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750) was the apex of a long line of contrapuntal writers. Already in his time he was something of an old fogey, doing little that was new—apart from popularising the new tuning of the scale, the Mean Temperament, which had such far-reaching consequences—but doing what he did so much better than anyone else that perfection is no extreme word to apply to his music. Readers will be familiar with the kind of music he wrote, and the Fugue analysed on page 35 will be sufficient guide.

Of a very different stamp and calibre was his contemporary, George Frederick Händel (1685–1759), who was in part responsible for swamping the dying music native to England with his ponderous bulk and vast output. It is said that the only original tune Händel wrote is that known as *The Harmonious Blacksmith*. However untrue that may be literally, I have it on the authority of the late Dr. Charles Wood that there may be seen in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge some of the composer's notebooks wherein he had jotted down tunes which he had heard and liked, many of them with a mark against them to indicate that he had himself used them later. This accusation of plagiarism used by his enemies can be made to suit other great composers equally. Bach used dozens of tunes by Luther as well as traditional German tunes; and so, indeed, did every great composer when it suited his purpose. The charge is a foolish one, and should never have been made. There is a nobility and sweep in his music, and a fine dramatic intensity in his operas. For an example of his music that is not too hackneyed, listen to the Harpsichord Concerto in B flat [97] and "The Lord is a Man of War" [98] from *Israel in Egypt*, and compare them with the music of Bach. There is a striking contrast. Bach, the paid servant of pettifogging provincial princelings and churchmen, producer of music whose poignancy is unmatched; Händel, recking little of where the next penny was coming from, intent, one might say, only on satisfying the wider needs of the English public for good, solid, straightforward music, which to-day still has its appreciative audience among the mass of the people.

The immediate predecessors of Bach and Händel were Fux (1660–1750) and Buxtehude [99] (1637–1707). It was the latter who was the organist so much admired by Bach

when he was a young man. Unfortunately the music of neither is readily accessible to-day. It must suffice to indicate that they were in the main stream of development of which Bach was the culminating point.

With the three names of Scheidt [100] (1587-1654), Schein [101] (1586-1630) and Schütz [102] (1585-1672) we come near the beginnings of German Art-music, which was fertilised by contact with Italy (see folding chart).

There is no space here to go into the earliest known period, of which the music is familiar, generally speaking, only to scholars.

And so we leave the German-speaking countries, from which so much music has come. We are getting near the end of this very brief sketch of the Genesis of Music in Europe.

#### (viii) THE EARLY ITALIANS (1750-c. 1550)

Properly speaking, this Section falls under two distinct heads. But for convenience we will group the two periods together. The first of these periods is really concerned with the Classical Italians from Martini (1706-1784) to Corelli (1659-1719). The style of the music has something of early Mozart in it. Indeed, Mozart, born fifty years later, was influenced by the Italians of his day to a considerable extent.

We will take as a sample piece of the period a Sonata by Domenico Scarlatti (1685-1725) [103]. It is interesting to note, by the way, the amazing difference in style between this Sonata and the music of Bach, who was born in the same year. Music in the Italy of this time had emancipated itself from the formal counterpoint which was still being written in Germany.

The second period, the true "Early Italians," ends with Cavalli (1600-1676) and Peri (1561-1633), already mentioned in connection with the first known operas, and goes back to the elder Gabrieli (1510-1586).

Two big names come in between: Monteverde (1567-1643) and Palestrina (1525-1594). The former also wrote operas of great beauty, such as *Orfeo* [22] and *La Coronazione di Poppea* [104]. The latter was the apex of the Italian contrapuntists, just as Bach was in his day. We need not worry here about what came before him. Here we see the pure sixteenth-century style in all its complexity and stylistic perfection.

Finally we note that the elder Gabrieli (1503-1580) was a pupil of Adrian Willaert (1480-1562), the Flemish founder of the Venetian School. Thus is the torch of learning handed from country to country.

#### (ix) THE EARLY FRENCH (1700-c. 1550)

In France during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—prior, that is, to Lully (1632-1687), who was the last French composer we dealt with, and after the early Paris School, with which music in Europe starts—music is distinguished chiefly for the work of the lutenists and early harpsichordists. These latter date from Henry Nivers (c. 1617—*post* 1701) to de Chambonnières (1602-c. 1672); the lutenists from Mésangeau, who was born some time before 1600 and died in 1639, to Claude Gervaise (*f.* 1550).

In this period there still survived what I surmise to have been the oriental influence of music with a more or less fixed accompaniment played by the singer himself with the vocal part so free as to have something of the manner of improvisation, just as Arab music to-day has. It is important in this respect to realise that European Art-music had its roots in the ancient Hebrew sacred music, which spread around both shores of the Mediterranean; north through Greece and Rome, whence the Church carried the traditions all over Europe; south along the coast to Spain, where the two streams met in confluence. You will hear on a record cited in the final Section (page 130) of this history a song by Maître Léonin, organist of Notre Dame in Paris in about 1100, which is remarkably like music sung by the cantors in synagogues to this day.

To go back a moment to the early clavecinists,\* Louis Couperin (1626-1661) wrote music which in its freedom from restrictions and indulgence in fantasy is extraordinarily like that of the English Purcell, who lived a generation later. And so we get a perfect sequence of development back to the grace of de Chambonnières (1602-c. 1672), the founder of the French School of Clavecinists; the sonorous gravity of Pinel (*f.* 1640); the experiments in freedom of Mésangeau (*ante* 1600-1639); the florid counterpoint of Guédron (1565-

\* The Clavecin (French for Harpsichord) was a keyboard instrument whose strings were plucked by quills; whereas the strings of the later pianoforte are hit by hammers.

post 1620); and the formalised severity of du Cauray (1549–1609) and Gervaise (fl. 1550). Two further characteristics of these early composers may be mentioned: the free adaptations of secular tunes to sacred uses, and the broken rhythms of the dance measures, which often have only one strain of 5 bars—6 bars—3 bars, making 14 in all.

#### (x) THE NETHERLANDS POLYPHONIC SCHOOL (1620–c. 1420)

The last representative of this great school of composers, Sweelinck (1562–1621), provides a link with the early French lutenists whom we have just been discussing. Similarly Adrian Willaert (1480–1562) was the bridge, as it were, which carried the traditions of the Netherlands Polyphony to Italy, as mentioned above (page 128). Josquin des Prés (1445–1521), the theoretician, Johannes Tinctoris (1446–1511) and Dufay (*ante* 1400–1474), and Binchois (c. 1400–1460), the father of them all, are some of the more important figures. The record of *Christe Redemptor* and *Conditor alme siderum* [106] by Dufay appears to be the only music of this period available on the gramophone, apart from some anonymous works.

All of this early music is difficult to examine in detail. Most of it is in manuscript, and then in a notation which only scholars (of whom I am not one) can read. The best one can do is to take the few examples there are and quote them as indicative of the loveliness that is inherent in music. The cursory manner in which I have seemingly dismissed the early Italians (page 128) and the Early French (page 129) is not due to any desire to create an adverse balance of importance. On the contrary, if I may openly avow my own predilections for a moment now that we are at the end of this little outline of history, the music of these early times makes more appeal to me than that of other periods on which I have here expended more space.

#### (xi) THE PARIS SCHOOL (c. 1370–c. 1100)

And so we come to the end, or, rather, the beginnings, of Art-music in Europe.

Some anonymous works [1 and 2] and two lovely songs [107], by Pérotin (c. 1120–c. 1170) and Léonin (fl. 1100) must suffice for the earliest known Art-music. These two composers were both organists at Notre Dame in Paris. The anonymous works may be from the Flemish School or not. I don't know. Anyway, they are fairly representative of

the pure monodic style, singular in the depth of emotion and religious fervour which has in Europe been the source of the best of her art in certain periods.

For it is a fact that the official Church has not been consistent in its attitude to the secular and pagan activities of the people. There have been times when popular traditions have been so strong that the only course open to the Church was to permit indulgence of traditional rites, even within the church buildings themselves. The festival of Christmas is in fact the ancient Mithraic ritual of sun-worship. And orgiastic celebrations of fertility-rites have been common enough; although to-day all that survives is the rather tame Harvest Festival, with its decorations of sheaves of corn and prize leeks from the squire's garden.

On all these occasions, purely secular music, often with licentious songs, have been permitted in church. Even at the time of the most highly stylised Church-music the basic material of the sung masses was frequently taken from secular songs. When the Lutheran Reformation allowed the congregation to sing, instead of compelling them to be passive spectators of an elaborate ritual in an alien tongue which none could understand, it was necessary to go to the people for music that they could easily learn. Luther therefore did the obvious thing, and used traditional secular tunes which the congregation already knew. Thus the style and content of music is always conditioned by the form of society in which it is produced.

The reflection is here induced that Art is essentially timeless. One talks of the "development" of this or that period of an art as if the products of any one time were "better" or more advanced than those of any other. This, I maintain, is violently untrue. Music was already before this time (the fifteenth century) perfect of its kind and in its way. To say that Schönberg or Wagner or Beethoven or Mozart were in any sense "better," more elaborate, more highly developed, than Bach or Scarlatti or Palestrina or Dufay is nonsense. The music of all is different. The aims and intentions of the composers were different; their technical equipment was different; they lived in different worlds, with different intellectual, social and historical backgrounds. Consequently, as I see it, it was impossible for people to write contrapuntal music in a world where men believed the earth to be flat and the universe terracentric. It was Galileo who, primarily, made pos-

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sible the invention of the projection of perspectives on to plane and, similarly, of counterpoint in music.

All these things need working out and relating to each other. To do so would occupy many years of research a whole book devoted to the subject. I mention the abc instance as an example of the lines on which I am thinking in my interpretation of the History of Music.

And at that I must leave it.

## VIII

### SERIOUS MUSIC AND POPULAR MUSIC THE GREAT SCHISM

THE Great Schism was the title of an article by Mr. Edw Evans in *The Music Lover*, a now defunct weekly paper which he was Editor. In it he pointed out the calamity which overtook music when the distinction between "serious" "classical" \* music and "popular" music became a reality. It was, he said, a disaster as serious as the Great Schism which overtook religion in an earlier time.

It must not be thought that this differentiation between so-called serious and popular music has always existed. This schism dates from the introduction of the Waltz.

Before we go any farther I want to distinguish between Popular Music and Folk-music. Folk-music has always been a fertile spring, a spontaneous expression of mostly anonymous composers. It is music which comes from the people. The English folk-tunes such as *Gathering Peas-cods* and Austrian Ländler are examples of folk-music. Popular Music, on the other hand, is music written for the people. Of this is the dance-music of our own day. The study of popular music would be an important adjunct to sociology. In it one could trace the romanticised love-theme of Victorian times with frequent death by misadventure of a little girl or her daddy, passing through the early days of jazz of the Let's-Get-Together Everybody's-Doing-It type to the nostalgic phase when Lew Kern and Ike Zizzbaum put their heads together.

\* Note that the word "classical" is used here and in what follows in a totally different sense from the opposition "romantic" previously defined. It is clear that Mr. Edw Evans means by "classical music" what I have throughout this book called Art-music.

to produce a poem the burthen of which was that the singer wished to be back on the old farm, frequently situated in Kentucky. The joint authors then handed their effusion to Alf Lohr, who in his turn collaborated with Mo Isaacs, Du Smith and even Ron Rogers to concoct a tune.\* It is the talented gentlemen who produce for mass consumption the Popular Music of to-day. Of true Folk-music there is to-day very little evidence. The National Anthem of Republic Spain might be cited as a recent example; and so, too, the American Negro "Spirituals." But in the main people to-day seem to prefer to be passive consumers rather than active producers of music.

Let me quote from Mr. Evans's article mentioned above:

"The greatest misfortune that has ever befallen the art of music is the schism that has divided it into two worlds, those of so-called 'classical' and 'popular' music. It is as great a misfortune as that which overtook religion in the Great Schism which rent the civilised world of its day in twain. But, somebody will timidly ask, has this distinction not always existed under one name or another? The answer is emphatically no. For centuries the only recognised distinction that may be said to correspond with it was that between sacred and profane music. Men made music for the glorification of God or the entertainment of their fellow-men, but in either case they made it with all the skill that was available in the day—and, what is more important, it was the same skilled musicians who made it."

"The great Bach family comprised in its earlier generations not only organists and cantors, but also town-pipers—let us call them conductors of municipal orchestras—who played for the entertainment of the public. Bach himself, though he wrote Church Cantatas with what some listeners-in nowadays consider to have been exaggerated zeal, so wrote music which, believe it or not, was found entertaining in its day. Haydn was a popular idol. Mozart would write for a Court Ball as readily as for High Mass. Schubert

writing his immortal Lieder, had no other thought—but another standard—than that of writing drawing-room songs. Weber composed the *Favourite Waltzes* of the Empress Marie Louise for the occasion of her Majesty's visit to Strassburg in 1810. It is true that she had never heard them before her arrival there, but Weber did not think it a

\* These names are fictitious.

SAUVE QUI PEUT take, for she was Viennese, and therefore had such excellent musical taste that his waltzes were certain to find favour, not because he was 'classical,' but because he was a skilled musician who should know how to write good waltzes.

"Thereupon a change comes over the scene. Under the influence of the Romantic Movement musicians began to put their art upon a pedestal of idealism—which was good—and keep her there as securely as in a nunnery, or as the statue of Liberty with her back to New York—which was bad. Schubert might have been in his way a waltz-king, but after him the line divides. In the kingdom of the dance the crown passed to Lanner, Keler Bela and three generations of the Strauss dynasty, whilst in the temple of idealism it passed to Mendelssohn, Schumann and Brahms. Thenceforth serious musicians would not demean themselves by 'ear-tickling,' any more than waltz-kings would try to write symphonies. On either side it would have been incongruous for them to do so, though Mozart did both cheerfully without thinking any the less of himself. Why should he?

"As the nineteenth century grew older the schism grew wider . . . and has widened ever since until composers, performers, and most of all listeners, seem to think of themselves as belonging to two different worlds. Worse still: each of these two worlds has developed its own particular brand of snobbishness, for it is just as snobbish to deride a man for being an alleged high-brow as it is to patronise him as a groundling for liking a tune he can whistle. . . . It was reserved for our democratic age to bring forward people who will say, not regretfully, but boastfully, that the best is not for the likes of them. Would it not show a better self-esteem if they boldly declared that the best music of any kind, whether symphony or jazz, was just barely good enough for them—and live up to it?"

This excellent article from which I have quoted so freely is in my opinion numbered among the most significant that Edwin Evans ever wrote. He exposes the whole tragic situation. What has to be done is to find a way out of this *impasse*.

I tried to show in the introductory remarks to the last Section (page 98) that the threefold cleavage between Art-music, Folk-music and Commercialised Jazz to-day is a necessary consequence of the class-divisions of society. I have tried

to indicate here and there, that at all times in history every social class has produced its own music. If this view is correct, it follows that complete unity in music cannot be achieved until society develops into a classless community.

That is not to say that nothing can be done *now*. I believe it to be the duty of every composer to ally himself with the progressive sections of the people, and to attempt to write music which, without entailing the composer being "untrue to himself," will assist in forwarding the aspirations and well-being of mankind.

Mr. Evans, in the article quoted above, takes the advent of the Waltz as the significant moment in the Great Schism. Why is this? The Waltz was music appropriated from the people (Austrian Ländler) by the ruling class at the time of the Congress of Vienna; and this coincided with the industrial revolution and the rise of the bourgeois-capitalist class. Since then, as Mr. Evans points out, the gulf has widened in accordance with the greater divisions within society itself.

It is up to us to close this breach. We can then envisage a future when music will no longer be the prerogative of the few, but will be the heritage of all.

## IX

### INTERPRETATION AND PERFORMANCE

IN the Section on Notation (page 39) I pointed out how very inadequate are our musical symbols, despite their complexity. Since the dawn of Romanticism in music began with Beethoven composers have in general been ever more meticulous in getting as close as they can to an exact expression of their intentions. In other words, composers have relied less and less on Interpretation in an endeavour to ensure a Performance of their music. Every slightest ornament is written out in full where before various squiggly signs known as Mordants written over the notes were deemed sufficient. Even these were not always written in the music. It was left to the skill and musicianship of the performer to put in these ornaments where he thought best. More curious still

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was a species of musical shorthand known as figured Bass. This left practically everything to the imagination of the interpreter of the music. All the composer did was to write in the bass part (usually in accompaniments to songs). Under every note he wrote one or two numerals. These numerals indicated the Intervals of the important notes above the written bass-notes. The figures 5, for example, denote the 5th position of the common chord, the 3 indicating the third, 5 indicating the dominant, above the written note. Similarly the figure 6 denotes the first inversion. Where E is the note given, the sixth above, C, is the operative note, intermediate G completing the chord being implicit. (also Ex. 9, page 118.) From this skeleton the interpreter was expected to be able to reconstruct the composer's idea or an approximation sufficiently close to it as not to matter. This was a fairly simple business when the vocabulary of the music was small. Even so, there was ample scope for outrageously false interpretations. It might be that all the composer wrote was

### Ex. 10

By this the interpreter understood

### Ex. 11

But it might well be that the musical context might demand an elaboration of this basic statement into

Ex. 12

Voice

Harpsichord & Gamba



But when the harmonic vocabulary of music became enlarged it was increasingly difficult and finally impossible to employ this shorthand. In addition the composer had become fully self-conscious. The individual in art was exalted. No longer did any art deal in the abstractions of natural expression. All the arts became highly individual. The ancient classical attitude of statements of fundamentals had gone. The psychological aspect was stressed. A parallel can be seen in literature and in painting. The qualities of universality which make the dramas of Sophocles supreme were no longer possible for a romantic such as Shakespeare, who dealt exclusively in personalities. Characters on the stage and in literature became "types." The world is invited to take an interest in their personal problems, displayed by a genius like Shakespeare in such a masterly way that it is possible for one to recognise one's friends in the skilfully drawn "characters."

Similarly in music it was no longer possible for a composer to remain anonymous, as the majority of early composers were perfectly content to be. For the most part it is rare to find a composer of any time up to the sixteenth century attaching his signature to his work with a flourish, proclaiming thereby that it is his work and no other's. We know to-day that so-and-so was the composer of this or that piece of music from other evidence. This was all changed by the advent of "the personal note," an illuminating expression (of which the Oxford English Dictionary surprisingly takes no account) whose significance in this connection was pointed out by that

great doctor and writer on art, Georg Groddeck.

There is, however, another aspect of Interpretation. This is concerned with the *kind* of music, some music by its very nature requiring more "interpretation" than other. Of such is the music of Chopin, for example. Every amateur pianist knows that it is impossible to "perform" Chopin. The nature of the musical thought is such that, no matter how many verbal directions may supplement the written notes, it makes nonsense of the music to play it as if the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth reside in them. All kinds of nuances and inflections, variations of tempo and dynamics, are essential to the music. The bare notes scarcely make sense of themselves unless the player is able by some mental alchemy to get behind the crotchets and quavers at the essence of the composer's intentions and distil from these obscure shadows what he can.

And here we come up against a difficulty. If so much depends on the player, whom are we to trust? Clearly the "rightness" of an interpretation must vary with the interpreter; and interpretative artists are much like other people in their reluctance to modify an attitude once they have declared it. They nail the colours of virtuosity to the mast of independence and won't haul them down for anybody. Thus, failing the higher authority of the composer himself, in the end we can but rely on our own feelings, and if driven beyond all bearing by the divergencies between our own ideas and the ones put before us, our sorry best, more often than not, is to call the man a fool and go our ways.

The odd thing is that when this process of "interpretation" is applied extensively to, say, Händel, the results are so devastating as to drive any sensitive soul out of the room.

Do not immediately run away with the idea that I am saying that Händel was able to write down precisely what he wanted. But the nature of his musical thought was such that he was able to approximate more closely to his intentions than the frequently nebulous music of romantics such as Chopin, cited above, or Debussy. A certain amount of imagination, that is, interpretation, is essential, no matter what the music may be. Which is why performers and interpreters are both right. In short, it is a matter of degree, not of kind, and varies with the laziness or inability of the composer to make himself clear, different kinds of music

needing more or less explication as the case may be. For I must take it that every composer wishes his music to be Performed and not Interpreted, to have the actuality of his own intentions realised rather than some spurious invention of whoever's hands his work may fall into.

Therefore in some respects the person I would lay by the heels is the composer, rather than his complementary adjunct the pianist, conductor or whatever he may be. The composer can never explain himself enough. And the trouble often is not that he cannot, but that he does not even try. When Shaw complained that Ibsen's plays were unintelligible unless they were produced on the stage by a man of genius, Ibsen's reply was: "What I have said, I have said." To which Shaw very properly retorted: "Precisely. But what you haven't said, you haven't said."

The justness of an interpretation or performance must therefore be left to the consensus of opinion.

## X

### - EMPHASIS ON THE PERFORMER

IT strikes me from time to time how odd it is that the public sets such store by the Performer. In a world such as ours to-day, where success and importance are measured in terms of money, one naturally looks to the film "stars" for the most striking figures. The income for 1937 (the latest figures available at the time of writing) of Mr. Fredric March, an American film actor, was £96,937. This is an index of the phenomenon, so curious to me, that people will go to see a film because this or that actor appears in it, irrespective of what the film may be about—if it is about anything.

The same phenomenon is observable on the stage and in the concert world. In neither of these professions does the popularity, and therefore the monetary income, of artists reach such astronomical figures. A musical conductor (as official documents describe the profession, presumably to avoid confusion with other denominations such as tram and omnibus conductors) is ordinarily not comparable. There is a certain coyness about musicians generally regarding these matters, in strong contrast to what some might con-

or the blatancy of certain film stars. So that in such cases I might be in a position to give comparative figures to a fair degree of accuracy, a reticence which I must respect prevents me from doing so. Suffice it that a conductor is fortunate if he makes one-twentieth as much as Fredric March, although a popular singer can earn possibly one-tenth.

The composer of concert-music is lucky if he gets into figures. And then it is a considerable exception. Most composers do not earn their livelihoods from their work. They are able to compose music only if they have a more or less assured income from other sources. But a composer of "popular" tunes such as Irving Berlin may have royalties on a single song amounting to £5,000.

It is all a question of supply and demand. Personalities know what people want; and they are willing to pay for their wants. It is I, and a few other eccentrics, who are peculiar. I and my kind would not walk across the street, as the saying is, to hear the most famous violinist or pianist in the land unless he was performing music that we wanted to hear.

It is this emphasis on the performer that once more takes us back to the beginnings of the Romantic Movement. I conclude this brief sketch with the entertaining story of the famous singer Farinelli, who was born in 1705 at Naples and died in 1782.

It was the custom in those days for boys with promising voices to be castrated to preserve the treble voice. Apocryphal stories are told that while a boy Farinelli had an accident while riding. But there is little doubt that the operation was seriously performed, with the result that he retained what is commonly said to have been the most perfect soprano voice ever heard. He visited England in 1734 when Händel was producing his operas here. Farinelli sang at the Theatre Royal, Lincoln's Inn in an opera *Arte serse*, with music mostly by Farinelli's brother, Broschi. It is said that the first note he sang, the air "Son qual nave" in this opera, was begun by Farinelli with such delicacy, swelled very gradually to such amazing volume and then subsided once more to the delicate *pianissimo* with which he began, that the audience applauded him for five minutes. His rapidity of execution on this opening note was such that the orchestra was unable to keep up with him. On another occasion Farinelli was

singing the part of a hero bound in chains. His cruel tormentor, a part taken by Senesino, was overcome by the touching beauty of Farinelli's voice; and, forgetting the part he had to play, rushed across the stage and embraced Farinelli in tears. The Prince of Wales presented him with a gold snuff-box, a pair of diamond knee-buckles, and a purse of a hundred guineas. During the four years he spent in London his salary was never less than £5,000 a year—a very considerable sum in those days. He returned to Italy, where he built himself a magnificent house out of the savings from his sojourn in England, calling it *English Folly*. He is credited with having alleviated the depressive mania of King Philip V of Spain by singing to him. The monarch had long abandoned interest in the outside world. But, having heard Farinelli once, he allowed himself to be shaved for the first time for many weeks, and thereafter retained Farinelli at his court at a salary of 50,000 francs, commanding him to sing the same four songs every night. This he did for nearly three years, without any variation, and was thus lost to the world of music. Philip appointed him Prime Minister, which post he held until the king's death in 1746.

It will be clear from all this that interpretative artists commonly have little or nothing to do with art. They are exhibitionists pure and simple, as much as those queer ladies and unfrocked clergy who exhibit themselves in barrels at seaside resorts. Music for them is a vehicle for their own personal advancement. And a highly profitable one, too.

It is clear, then, that the majority of audiences go to public performances mainly to hear this or that famous artist. Kreisler, Gigli, Toscanini, will always fill a concert-hall, no matter what music they perform. The last-named is certainly an artist in the truest sense of the word. It so happens that he is also a superb showman, which attribute is surely an indispensable part of the artist's equipment. But too often showmanship is made use of to display a well-formed larynx; and not many people mind that there is no real musical sense or sensibility there. Certainly people are entitled to their enjoyment of these physical feats. But it has nothing to do with music, which is debased into a vehicle for personal display and advancement.

## ACTIVE LISTENING

ALREADY in the last Section (page 139) mention had to be made of the audience in relation to music. I now want to consider the listener exclusively.

What does the listener want from music? I have already pointed out that for the majority of concert-goers the appeal of what is called in advertisements for concerts "personal appearances" of people famous for their physical prowess in brilliance of execution of showy pieces fulfils all their needs. Signor X appears at the Royal Albert Hall in London with a programme of half a dozen songs which serve to arouse the audience's impatient enthusiasm, and then the real business of the evening begins with the Encores, which take the form of old favourites which everyone knows. Signor X makes a lot of money, so does his manager, so does his agent. His audience are enraptured and grateful to the celebrity for being so good as to sing eight or nine songs over and above the advertised programme. In short, a good time is had by all. I am not so unkind as to wish to deprive these good people of their simple pleasures, or even to tell them that they ought not to enjoy them. I do not set myself up to be anybody's judge in these things. All I do is to protest that it is not music.

I repeat the question. What does the listener want from music? One answer is provided by the request with which every amateur performer is familiar: "Play us something we know." This is an interesting requirement. It shows that, as someone has previously said, popularity is synonymous with familiarity. To listen to unknown music demands a mental effort from which the generality of people in our society is averse.

The reason for this, I believe, is inherent in our social system. Only very few people have the privilege of an education that trains or even encourages them to think. This has always been the case since the beginnings of class-society.

The student of history will remember that the extensive introduction of machinery about a hundred and fifty years ago faced the ruling class with the necessity of teaching the workers how to use it; that is, of teaching them to read, write

would also lay open the workers to the influence of "dangerous thoughts" was, however, perceived by many at the time. The ruling class was therefore in a dilemma, which is well expressed by two quotations. In 1807 a Mr. Giddy rose in the House of Commons and delivered himself as follows:

"However specious in theory the project might be, of giving education to the labouring masses of the poor, it would in effect be found to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life, instead of making them good servants in agriculture and other laborious employments to which their rank in society has destined them, instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them factious and refractory, as was evident in the manufacturing counties; it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books, and publications against Christianity; it would render them insolent to their superiors; and in a few years the results would be that the legislature would find it necessary to direct the strong arm of power towards them, and to furnish the executive magistrate with much more vigorous laws than were now in force."

(*Hansard, quoted in Hammond's "Town Labourer."*)

This weighty argument so frightened the Government that the proposal to educate "the labouring masses of the poor" was dropped. However, the matter was reopened in 1839, when it was pointed out in a semi-official report to Parliament that the dangers of ignorance were, if anything, greater than the dangers of at least some knowledge. This report, after drawing attention to the probability that "persons and property will, in certain parts of the country, be so exposed to violence as materially to affect the prosperity of our manufactures and commerce, to shake the mutual confidence of mercantile men, and to diminish the stability of our political and social institutions" drew the following conclusion:

"It is astonishing to us that the party calling themselves Conservatives should not lead the van in promoting the security of property and the maintenance of public order. To restore the working classes to their former state of incurious and contented apathy is impossible, if it were desirable. If they are to have knowledge, surely it is part of a wise and virtuous Government to do all in its power to

pernicious opinions."

In this uncomfortable dilemma the Government was eventually compelled to act. After thirteen Bills had been thrown out of Parliament, the School Boards for Elementary Education were set up in 1870, with the ingenious safeguard of the Cowper-Temple Clause added in 1891, which provided for religious instruction of a type that taught a just humility, an acceptance of the station in life to which God had called one, and the promise of extensive rewards in a heaven hereafter. (See page 124.)

It is clear, then, that the original purpose of the official educational system was to teach people just enough to be good and faithful servants, and to be able to read public notices telling them what they were not allowed to do.

It is equally clear that this system, which is so aptly called "elementary education," has greatly discouraged independent thought and that inquiring attitude of mind which has always been the mainspring of the full and creative life.

It is not surprising, therefore, that very few people have been sufficiently hardy to withstand the imposition of such a mental strait-jacket. Probably none has escaped undamaged in this respect.

Consequently, we are now faced with the desirability of creating social conditions in which all may have an equal opportunity to take part in every form of social activity. The situation in the world to-day provides us with the possibility of bringing this about. The Butler Education Bill, at the present moment before the House of Lords, will do much to assist in this, despite the rejection of a proposal to incorporate music in the general curriculum. Moreover, people must wake up to the fact that participation in music—whether creating it, performing it or listening to it—is essentially a social activity. The commercial aspect, which almost completely dominates any kind of music-making to-day, must be put in its proper place—on the shelf.

The delicacy of Bali music, the voluptuous romance of Arab songs, the fervour of French twelfth-century religious music, the scintillating brilliance of Mozart, the magnificence of Beethoven, the refined subtlety of Debussy, the transcendental flights of Schönberg, the vitality of Stravinsky, all evoke responses in me. There are, naturally, many aspects of this or

that art to which I am impervious. This or that composer simply does not strike on my box, if I may repeat an expression used earlier in this book. But the thing to aim at, to put it as if it were possible to employ a conscious act of volition in these matters, is enjoyment of as much as possible.

Enjoyment of music, that is the important thing. To take pleasure in listening to music. More: to take an active pleasure in listening. For it is not a passive business. The listener must always do his share, trying his best to comprehend, to co-operate with, the composer who, even although it is true to say that he writes music because he can't help it, must write with reference to an audience. And that audience is you.

THE END

## SUGGESTED GRAMOPHONE RECORDS

THE reader is referred to that excellent American publication, *The Gramophone Shop Encyclopedia of Recorded Music* (1936), for certain records marked with an \*, as well as for many other recordings of early and unusual music which do not appear in English catalogues.

1. *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, Anon., Columbia History of Music, Record 5710.
2. *Mira Lege*, Anon., Col. Hist. Mus., Record 5710.
3. *Sanctus* from *Missa Papæ Marcelli*, Palestrina (florid Counterpoint), Col. Hist. Mus., Record 5712.
4. Sundanese Song *Udan mas* (Java), Parlophone "Music of the Orient," MO103.
5. *Gender Wajang*, "Selendero," Bali Music to a Shadow Play. Parlophone "Music of the Orient," MO105.
6. Modern Chinese Drama *Pang-tse*, "Nan-tien-men," Parlophone "Music of the Orient," MO103.
7. *Nachtzauber*, Wolf, Col. Hist. Mus., DB1234.
8. *Noël*, Fauré, LB42.
9. "Fantoches" from *Fêtes Galantes*. First Series, Debussy—unfortunately not obtainable singly—Album of the Songs of Debussy, DA1471-7.
10. Minuet from *Don Giovanni*, Mozart, DA977.
11. Allemande and Courante from Suite No. 8 in F minor for Harpsichord, Händel, Col. Hist. Mus., DB502.
12. Pavan and Galliard, *The Earl of Salisbury*, William Byrd, Col. Hist. Mus., Record 5712.
13. Passacaglia, Händel, DB1322. (This is not entirely satisfactory for my purpose. But see last movement of Brahms's Fourth Symphony, DB2253-7.)
14. *Sumer Is Icumen In*, Canon by John Fornsete (?), Col. Hist. Mus., Record 5715.
15. Fugue in E flat for Clavichord, Bach, L2242.
16. First Suite for Harpsichord, Purcell, Col. Hist. Mus., DB502.
17. Sonata for Harpsichord and Viola-da-Gamba, Bach, DB1322.
18. Sonata No. 1 in E flat, Haydn, DB1837.
19. Sonata in A major (K331), Mozart, DB1993.

20. Sonata in C minor (opus 111), Beethoven, LX491.
21. Symphony No. 41 in C major ("The Jupiter"), LX282.
22. *Orfeo*, Monteverde. (For this the Album of Selected Works by Monteverde is recommended, DB5038-42.)
23. *The Rite of Spring*, Stravinsky, D1919-22.
24. *L'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, Debussy (opening bars for solo flute), LX805.
25. *Daphnis and Chloe*, Ravel (opening bars for flute and clarinet arpeggii), D1826-7.
26. *The Planets*, "Neptune," Holst, L1542.
27. *Hänsel and Gretel*, Humperdinck, DB1758.
28. Clarinet Quintet, Mozart, LX624-7.
29. *Bolero*, Ravel, LX48-9.
30. *Till Eulenspiegel*, Strauss, E10925-6.\*
31. Violin Concerto, Stravinsky, PD556173-5.\*
32. *Symphony of Psalms*, Stravinsky, LX147-9.
33. *Don Giovanni*, Mozart, Vols. 7, 8, 9, The Mozart Society.
34. Second Symphony, Brahms, LX1515-9.
35. *Die Meistersinger*, Overture, Wagner, LX557.
36. *Don Quixote*, Strauss, LX186-90.
37. *Petrushka*, Stravinsky, DB3511-4.
38. *Symphonie Fantastique*, Berlioz, D2044-9.
39. *The Magic Flute* (Papageno's Music), Mozart, R979.
40. *Casse Noisette Suite*, Tchaikovsky, C2922-4.
41. *Carnaval Romain*, Berlioz (English Horn solo), LX570.
42. *L'Arlésienne*, Bizet, E10597-8.
43. *Das Rheingold*, Wagner (Anvils), D169, side 3.
44. The Madrigal (excellent examples of the English Madrigal are recorded in the Columbia History of Music):
 

*Rest, Sweet Nymphs*, Pilkington; *Sing we and Chant It*, Morley, Record 5717.

*As Vesta was from Latmos Hill Descending*, Weelkes; *The Silver Swan*, Gibbons; *Fair Phyllis*, Farmer, Record 5717.
45. *Fantasy for a Chest of Six Viols*, Weelkes, Col. Hist. Mus., Record 5714.
46. *Egmont*, Beethoven, DB1925.
47. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mendelssohn, D1626-7.
48. *Hassan*, Delius, Vol. 3, The Delius Society.

49. *Third Piano Concerto*, Prokofiev, DB.1725-7.  
*Peter and the Wolf*, Prokofiev, DB3900-2.
50. Symphony No. 5, Shostakovich, DB3991-6.
51. Violin Concerto, Khachaturian, K1082-6.
52. *Song of the Fatherland*, Dunayevsky, FB2767.  
*Soviet Airmen's Song*, Dunayevsky, FB2767.
53. String Trio, Webern, K904.
54. *Lyric Suite for String Quartet*, Berg, CA8244-7.
55. Symphony, Hindemith, E164-9.
56. String Trio No. 2, Hindemith, LX311-3.
57. Duet for Viola and 'Cello, Hindemith, Col. Hist. Mus., DB1789.
58. List of Recorded Works by Stravinsky:  
*The Song of the Nightingale*, D1932.  
*Petrushka*, DB3511-4.  
*The Rite of Spring*, LX119-23.  
*The Soldier's Tale*, LX197-9.  
*Les Noces*, LX326-8.  
Octet for Wind Instruments, LX308-9.  
Concertino for String Quartet (withdrawn).  
*Symphony of Psalms*, LX147-9.  
Capriccio for Piano and Orchestra, LX116-8.  
Violin Concerto, PD556173-5.  
Duo Concertant for Violin and Piano, CM199.  
*Apollon Musagète*, X167-70.  
*Pulcinella*, LFX289, D15126.  
Serenade in A, C-LF139-40.  
*Firebird*, CM115.  
*Jeux de Cartes*, Piano Rag-Music, Ragtime for 11 Instruments, LX382.
59. *The Enchanted Flute*, Ravel, DB1785.
60. String Quartet, Ravel, LY6105-7.
61. *Jeux d'Eau*, Ravel, DB1534.
62. Twelve Studies for Piano, Debussy, K891-6.
63. "En fermant les yeux," from *Manon*, Massenet, DB3603. (This song should be compared with Mahler's *Ich atmet einen linden Duft*, No. 67 below.)
64. *Spanish Rhapsody*, Chabrier, E522.
65. Prelude, Chorale and Fugue, Franck, DB1299-1300.
66. Scherzo from String Quartet in E flat major, opus 109, Reger, G-EH886.\*

67. *Ich atme einen unaen Duft*, Massenet, DB1786.  
 DB1787. (This song should be compared with  
 Massenet's "En fermant les yeux," No. 63 above.)  
 68. *Das Buch der hängenden Gärten*, Schönberg, Col.  
 Hist. Mus., DB1787.  
 69. *Ein Heldenleben*, Strauss, VM44.\*  
 70. Overture to *Der Freischütz*, Weber, DB1874.  
 71. Overture to *Oberon*, Weber, DB3554.  
 72. Bridal Cortège from *Le Coq d'Or*, Rimsky-Korsakov,  
 B8633.  
 73. *Le Poème d'Extase*, Scriabin, DB1706-7.  
 74. *Thamar*, Balakirev, DB4801-2.  
 75. Coronation Scene from *Boris Godunov*, Mussorgsky,  
 DB900.  
 76. *Kaléidoscope*, Cui, DA1010.\*  
 77. Polovtsi March from *Prince Igor*, Borodin, DB1683.  
 78. Overture to *Russlan and Ludmila*, Glinka, D1808.  
 79. Overture to *Zampa*, Hérold (old recording), C1818.  
 80. *Le Tambourin*, Rameau, E10514.  
 81. Couperin: available only in Couperin Society, one vol.  
     of harpsichord music played by Landowska.  
 82. (a) Prelude to *Alceste*, (b) March from *Thésée*, (c)  
     Notturno from *Le Triomphe de l'Amour*, Lully,  
     DB1587.  
 83. Finale of Symphony No. 104 in D major, Haydn,  
     LX856-8.  
 84. Finale of First Symphony in C major, Beethoven,  
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 85. Sinfonia in B flat major, J. C. Bach, D1988.  
 86. Dance of the Blessed Spirits from *Orpheus*, Gluck,  
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 87. *La Bohème*, Puccini, DB3448-60.  
 88. "Non piangere, Lui," "Nessun dorma," from  
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 89. *Requiem*, Verdi, D1751-60.  
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 91. *Serenade to Music*, Vaughan Williams, LX757-8.  
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     Concerto in E flat major, John Ireland, DX1072-4.  
 92. Concerto for Viola and Orchestra, William Walton,  
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  94. *Dido and Aeneas*, Purcell (Purcell Society).
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  99. Fugue in F major for Organ, Buxtehude, G-FM23.\*
  100. Chorale-paraphrase: *Credo* for Organ, Scheidt, Anthologie Sonore.
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  103. Andante and Presto from Sonata in A major, Scarlatti, DB2847.
  104. "May Sweet Oblivion Lull Thee," from *La Coronazione di Poppaea*, Monteverde, Col. Hist. Mus., \* DB500.
  105. *Filiae Jerusalem*, Gabrieli, G-D833.\*
  106. *Christe Redemptor* and *Conditor alme siderum*, Dufay, Col. Hist. Mus., Record 5711.
  107. Conductus: *Beata viscera Mariae Virginis*, Pérotin; Organum Duplum: *Haec Dies*, Léonin, Lumen 3201.
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# LITERATURE

## THE SECOND COMMON READER

Virginia Woolf A 132

The subjects range from the Elizabethans to D. H. Lawrence, including The Poems of Donne, Swift and Stella, De Quincey's Autobiography, Hazlitt, Defoe, Beau Brummell, Dr. Burney's Evening Party, Walter Scott, Aurora Leigh, Meredith, Hardy, Christina Rossetti, Edmund Gosse, and a number of other essays.

"I think," wrote Mrs. Woolf herself of this book, "one might describe it as an unprofessional book of criticism dealing with such lives and books as have chanced to come my way, rather from the point of view of a writer than of a student or critic. I have often no doubt been interested in a book as a novelist; but as often have read and written simply for amusement and without any wish to establish a theory."

## life in SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

J. Dover Wilson A 143

Extracts from writers contemporary with Shakespeare, arranged to illustrate the social atmosphere which surrounded the poet at different periods of his career, and is reflected in his work. The sections are England and the English: the Countryside: Superstition: Education: London: Books and Authors: the Theatre: The Court: House and Home: Rogues and Vagabonds: The sea: An Elizabethan Day. An annotated glossary is appended.

## IN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

R. G. Collingwood A 136

Professor Collingwood, Waynflete professor of Metaphysical Philosophy at Oxford, attained fame in two special fields: as a philosopher and as an expert on Roman Britain. But he was far more than a philosopher or an archaeologist or an historian: he was a humanist with a passionate belief in democratic ideals. His short account from his own hand of his life and how he shaped it, of his reaction to the influences of contemporary life and the modern climate of opinion, is a document of first importance for the understanding of the twentieth century.

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**BY ARNOLD L. HASKELL**

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# BALLET



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AND TWENTY-FIVE ORIGINAL DECORATIONS IN THE TEXT BY

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# BALLET

## *A Complete Guide To Appreciation*



*History, Aesthetics  
Ballets, Dancers*

Arnold L. Haskell

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TO

## *Ninette de Valois*

whose artistry, knowledge, inspiring leadership, consistency, and courage have made the ballet at Sadler's Wells into a national treasure, and who, by doing so, has added an exciting new chapter to the history of the art. And to her company, of the Vic-Wells Ballet, as she would wish.

A. L. H.

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midi d’un Faune”

## INTRODUCTION TO REVISED EDITION

I HAVE aimed here at a guide to the appreciation of ballet for members of a vastly growing audience and for those dancers and teachers who require a closer understanding of their art, and who realise that steps are not enough.

I have not attempted any technical-mechanical explanations. Such a thing, if at all possible, is intolerably tedious in print and belongs to those who have made it their speciality. There are enough dancing schools to satisfy any wants in that direction. I have included a small glossary of the terms I have been forced to use, purely for purposes of identification. I have tried throughout to avoid any technical jargon.

For the present revised edition I have left the bulk of the text unchanged. This book was conceived as a guide to ballet in general, and the principles laid down cannot date. My main alterations and additions have been in Chapters VI and VII, which deal with the application of those principles to the contemporary scene. In accordance with that idea, I have included in this edition a series of photographs of our Sadler's Wells Ballet that has grown so greatly in popularity and achievement. This does not mean that Russian Ballet has ceased to occupy a position of importance, and I trust that future editions may have further photographs of Russian visitors to this country, both Soviet and émigré.

I have given a brief review of the war years in an appendix.

I would like to thank Mr. Allen Lane of Penguin Books Ltd. for his interest in the present volume, and for the realisation that in these troubled times an increasing number of people are finding calm in the gentle art of ballet, in which tradition is such a vital factor.

Finally, I would like to thank Miss Kay Ambrose for placing at my disposal her splendid decorations, which make this little book a thing of beauty.

ARNOLD L. HASKELL.

22 HORNTON STREET, W.8  
LONDON, 1944.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTORY

*The present-day popularity of ballet—Strong influence of the audience—The ignorance of the young dancer—The importance of ballet as an artistic medium—The scheme of the book.*

As recently as seven years ago ballet was seasonal, an expensive luxury that appealed to the very few; today<sup>1</sup> in London there is ballet throughout the year, and at Sadler's Wells for a nine months' season at cinema prices. The art enjoys a popularity it has not known since the middle of last century, if then. In one year, 1936, seven different companies appeared in London, each one performing its version of *Les Sylphides*, *Carnaval*, and other popular works. Two companies ran simultaneously in the West End, both to good houses. As recently as seven years ago a taste for ballet was considered a trifle precious. There were many jokes about the anaemic-looking, long-haired youths and the short-haired, untidy women in hand-spun fabrics who enthused or muttered the current formula of "What fun, how amusing, my dear." Ballet still has its small lunatic band of hangers-on who make themselves conspicuous both sartorially and vocally,<sup>2</sup> but it has gained a great new public. The man in the street has discovered it and is so enchanted with his discovery that the ballet has become a habit. He has found out that though the repertory of works is strictly limited, the performances themselves vary enormously, and he begins to find a keen pleasure in comparing the various Sylphides he has seen during the past year. Before he knows where he is, he has become a critic.

It is possible to be carried away by the beauty of ballet, one of the very last strongholds of theatrical illusion, without possessing any critical standards or any backgrounds of knowledge, but only the trained eye will reap the maximum of pleasure from a performance, the man who is conscious, not merely of his enjoyment, but of the reasons behind it.

There are two parties to every theatrical manifestation: the performers and their public; and it is ultimately the public who

<sup>1</sup> I leave this unaltered. The war has proved that the popularity of ballet was not just a boom. Sadler's Wells Ballet in its wartime home at the New Theatre invariably plays to full houses.

<sup>2</sup> See Glossary, under *Balletomane*, and illustration, page 10.



THE LUNATIC FRINGE

d dictate the quality of the performance. The hypercritical public of the Imperial Russian theatres, those old *habitues* who could count every beat and who could in imagination dance every movement, were responsible for the triumph of a Pavlova.

It was Pavlova who once told the present writer, "The public here is so exceedingly generous that while it warms my hear does not help me. Tonight, I know that I did not dance *Dying Swan* as well as usual, but the applause was exactly same. I would have been pleased if it had been just a little less. Only because she was hypercritical of herself did Pavlova maintain her high standard, and she had learned to be hypercritical from her first audiences in Russia and from the highly evolved system of training that formed her."

Today we are living in an age of rapid results. There is reason to believe that dancers do not possess the same degree of artistic talent as in the past. Most certainly they have greater technical aptitude than in former years, but that talent and that aptitude are forced. Where before it took ten years to form a dancer, now it takes three, four, or, exceptionally, five years. More than ever, therefore, the dancer depends upon the critical standards of her audience. But the audience itself is a fresh one that has formed its critical standards from the young dancers. *The need of the dancers and their audience is identical a background of knowledge that will develop the critical faculties*

I have tried in this book to prepare such a background, both for the spectator and for the young dancer. No art can be learnt from a book, but a book can help the tyro to sort out his own loose impressions, and to form for himself a basis of criticism that will add, not only to his pleasure, but in the end to the health development of the art.

Ballet is essentially an art of tradition, a tradition that is living force. Music has its score, the drama its book, and the paintings of the past can be seen on the walls of museums and to a certain extent in reproduction. Ballet enjoys no such advantages. The tradition is handed down from master to master. Cease dancing for twenty years and the damage might well be beyond repair. When the great dancer dies, nothing but a name and sometimes a legend would seem to remain. That is the superficial view. Tradition has been enriched by every great dancer, and something of her contribution to the art survives and is taught in the classrooms and on the stage.

## INTRODUCTORY

Taglioni, Zucchi, Pavlova have left behind them a very positive contribution to the art they graced, though it might be difficult to analyse it in words. For this reason I have started the book with a brief historical sketch. The average theatre-goer may have seen or read a Greek tragedy; he will almost certainly have seen a play by Shakespeare. The theatrical producer, the young Academy student, and the dramatic critic will all be familiar with the drama of the past. It is rightly considered an indispensable part of theatrical education. But no dancing school teaches the history of ballet, few dancing teachers themselves know the origin of the steps they are teaching or their aesthetic significance. Yet such knowledge is both practical and indispensable. Physically the young dance pupil is better trained than her actress sister, she works harder, she has more technical virtuosity. But mentally there can be no comparison. The actress from a reputable school is taught to think, the dancer to perform steps that are meaningless in themselves. "*Dance with your head,*" said Pavlova; the thousands of young dancers who graduate annually can only dance with their feet. The trade of dancing flourishes, but the art suffers. And it is important today that the art of dancing should flourish in this country.

Dancing knows no language barriers, consequently ballet is the greatest shop-window for a nation's art. Russia realised this (she still does. Was not *Swan Lake* chosen for the edification of Anthony Eden before the great Soviet ballerina Semenova fell into disgrace or worse ?), and what we know of Russia artistically first came to us through the Russian Ballet. We saw and applauded Karsavina; she showed us the art of Alexandre Benois, Leon Bakst, Nathalie Gontcharova, and others; through her we first heard the music of Stravinsky. The realisation that Russia was not at that time a far-removed and semi-barbarous country may have turned many to Russian literature and drama. There is nothing far-fetched in the supposition. On the Continent today England is thought of as being backward in music and painting. She is known mainly through her football, her bad cooking, and the excellent cut of her suits, important but limited, and sometimes even the football matches are lost. The ballet, better than a hundred concerts or exhibitions of painting opened by epigrammatic ambassadors, can convince people to the contrary. They will be learning without conscious effort. I have purposely stressed this utilitarian angle of ballet,

since art for art's sake is not at this time such a popular slogan as art for propaganda's sake, and ballet is legitimate propaganda and not *bouffage de crâne* or goebelling. Today, in order to survive without subsidies, ballet must be popular. Its appeal is no longer restricted to the courtier, the specialist, or the snob.

After sketching the history of ballet from a practical rather than an academic angle, I will deal with the aesthetics of ballet again from the practical angle of the dancer and her public. In a further section, I will amplify that study by analysing certain "key" ballets that are constantly in the repertoire, attempting to bring so rash as a guide to beauty, but filling in a background that may make the beauty more significant.

The story of modern ballet can best be developed by a study of various outstanding personalities, since an art of tradition depends essentially upon personalities and the impression that they make upon their followers, whose task it will be to preserve and extend the legacy. I will touch only lightly upon certain aspects of the contemporary scene. At the present day activity is so great that any detailed critical account of companies and dancers would be out of date within a few weeks. I will, however, include some mention of the leading dancers of today.

The next few years may well decide the entire future of ballet, so that it is more than ever necessary for those who love the art to temper their enthusiasm with a background of knowledge and tradition. Ballet does need saving from its friends, from the person "who knows what he likes and doesn't know why," as well as from the person who "thinks he knows why." A number of major Russian Ballet companies have created innumerable partisans in search of excitement and hangers-on out for their own profit. Dancers and public suffer. The quality of the work alone matters. This cannot be sufficiently stressed. It may be that Russian Ballet is about to be strangled by unscrupulous methods, by ridiculous pygmies who do not know the difference between *Swan Lake* and *Les Sylphides*. The unfortunate artists, treated like stocks and shares, are helpless in their hands. The public, by adopting a critical attitude, can help.<sup>1</sup>

Ballet is an expressive art without language barriers. Such an art is certainly of value just now.

<sup>1</sup> Today this is a problem for the American ballet public.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

*The place and nature of ballet—The first important ballet—The birth of professional ballet—Technique and artistry, a permanent struggle—Noverre—The influence of Milan—The Romantic Ballet—The decline of ballet—The origins of Russian Ballet.*

#### (i)

THERE are various ways of treating the history of ballet: technically, socially, or aesthetically. The technical, while it is of the greatest interest when demonstrated, is dull and almost meaningless in description. I shall therefore refer to technical development but indirectly, and concentrate on the social and aesthetic aspects of ballet history. This chapter is merely a sketch with many omissions. Its purpose here is to serve as a background for what follows, and as a hint of the fascination and importance of the subject.

There is one initial conception without which it is impossible to understand ballet: it is the vital conception that nearly all young ballet dancers ignore. *Ballet is a modern art, dancing is prehistoric. The history of ballet is but a fragment of the history of dancing.* It may interest us the most, but it is far from being the most important. Dancing belongs to the village, the temple, the church, and, most recently, the stage. Dancing may be indulged in for the sheer pleasure of the performer, because the performer is frightened and wishes to placate an angry god, because it has become a ceremonial and the performer no longer knows its exact significance, because the performer wishes to entertain a public. Dancing may be entirely spontaneous—David dancing before the Ark; guided by a simple pattern—the Morris dance; or highly complex and only possible to the specialist—ballet.

We are interested in dancing that belongs to the stage, that has its being because the performer wishes to entertain a public, and that is highly complex in form and only possible to the specialist. Such dancing existed in the heyday of Greek culture, was known to the Roman Emperors and practised by them, journeyed from Italy to France, and was, so to speak, codified by the logical French mind to become the art we know today.

Ballet, in the form that we recognise it, had its being with the

founding of *L'Academie* in 1661. We are able to trace its development in an unbroken line of dancers and teachers from then until the present day.<sup>1</sup>

The germ that was to develop into ballet was brought into France from Italy by Catherine de Medici, who was eager to divert her sons while she busied herself in ruling. The spectacle was a combination of dancing, singing, and recitation. Its aim was social. It constituted an elegant pastime for the monarch and his court, an opportunity for bawdy humour, for lavish expenditure, and for the fulsome flattery of court to King. The subjects chosen were largely mythological; the King played at godship, the court worshipped. Astute minds, bent on politics rather than pleasure, used the fashionable craze for purposes of national propaganda, among other things, to point out to foreign ambassadors the might of France; much as Hitler today performs his goose-step, but more elegant and subtle, as becomes the French. The finest artistic minds of the day contributed to the music, the decoration, and the poetry of the spectacle. The people paid. The first dramatic ballet of importance from which the history of the art may be said to begin was *Le Ballet Comique de la Reyné* in 1581.

It was mounted by Catherine's first valet, Baldassarino Bel-giosso, an Italian who took the French name of Baltasar de Beaujoyeux. He was considered the best violinist of his day, and for a long time afterwards the first violin continued the functions of dancing master. The teacher of dancing with his little kit is familiar in the work of Hogarth; Dickens mentions it at the class of Mr. Turveydrop in *Bleak House*; Prince Turvey-drop fiddled while his father revealed deportment. It was only later that there was a sharp division between the musician and the dancer, a fact that it will be well to remember.

This first notable ballet was to celebrate the wedding of Mademoiselle de Vaudemont, the Queen's sister, to one of the King's *mignons*, Le Duc de Joyeuse. It told the story of a hero who escaped from the wiles of Circe through the intervention of the gods: a thinly veiled allegory. The ladies of the court, unaccustomed to dancing, which was almost exclusively a male pursuit, took part in what was the first *corps de ballet*. The steps of the dance being severely limited, de Beaujoyeux showed extraordinary invention in his pattern and production. "Arch-

<sup>1</sup> For the story of that pedigree, see the author's *Ballet Panorama*.

## THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

medes himself," said Beaujoyeux, "could not have understood geometrical proportions better than the princesses and ladies practised them in this ballet." In planning a sumptuous spectacle to celebrate one happy occasion, he had laid the foundations of a new art form.

Under Louis XIV the dance developed still farther. The King himself was an expert dancer who created an extraordinary number and variety of roles between 1651 and 1669, sometimes appearing in the same ballet under a number of different guises, from low comedy to an impersonation of the gods and heroes of antiquity. He enjoyed the collaboration of the greatest men of his day: the field-marshall de Bassompierre, a *premier danseur* between campaigns, so enthusiastic a dancer that he even wrote a battle dispatch in terms of ballet, dignified parliamentary councillors and indolent courtiers who, devoting their whole time to the dance, became semi-professionals. Molière conceived subjects for ballets and advised in their production. Each one of his comedies contained dancing scenes, and many ballets introduced comedies. The two were not yet distinct. Lully and Beauchamps were the dancing master musicians of the court. Already the art was becoming firmly planted in French soil.

There were professional dancers at this time: gipsies, tumblers and acrobats, rogues and vagabonds, wandering from fair to fair amusing the crowds with their capers, far removed from the elegants who danced to amuse themselves and their friends. To this day ballet dancers and circus folk alone in the theatre maintain a tradition of aloofness, living in a world of their own, true to their standards and beliefs. *Ballet as we know it was born when the acrobatics of the professional and the aristocratic grace of the courtier were united.* It was under the ægis of Lully and Beauchamps that the ballet became professional, and the change was marked by the foundation by Louis XIV of *L'Académie Nationale de Musique et de la Danse* in 1661, still flourishing today at the Opéra, Paris. The King himself, becoming corpulent, abandoned the dance eight years later and the court followed suit.

The dance made rapid progress, which students can follow in close detail, thanks to the notation of Feuillet, Thoinot Arbeau, and Rameau.

Now, the history of dance technique is closely bound up with

the history of costume. The women's costumes at the court of Louis XIV were long and heavy, concealing both legs and feet. There was no chance for virtuosity. There could be a geometrical pattern, but no vertical movement, no escape from the eternal pavane and minuet. The whole history of early dance development lies in the search for elevation. When a ballet of this period required the illusion of flight it was necessary to have recourse to levers and pulleys; machinery took the place of physical effort.

The first *ballerina* to move upwards and so enrich the dance was La Camargo in 1721, and she caused a scandal at the beginning by shortening her skirt just a few inches. The actual costume can be seen in Lancret's famous painting. She brought in the early form of the *entrechat*. Her great contemporary, Sallé, tried to free the dance still further by wearing Greek draperies in a ballet, *Pygmalion*, performed at Covent Garden, but the innovation did not catch on for two hundred years, until the time of Isadora Duncan. Only fourteen years later a pupil of Sallé was dancing in *Pygmalion* in Paris in a hooped skirt. The struggle between heavy skirts and muscular freedom continued until after the French Revolution, when Maillot, the costumier of the French opera, invented tights, and this hypocrisy meant the effective triumph of muscular freedom. Even the Pope sanctioned the usage of tights in the theatres under his jurisdiction, though they had to be blue so as not to suggest the too dangerous colour of flesh!

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the five positions, basis of the technique of ballet,<sup>1</sup> known today to every week-old dancer, were used in a modified form, and Italian masters recommended a slightly turned-out position of the feet. For a long time French dancing retained the graceful, flowing, non-virtuoso inspiration of the minuet, while the Italians, given to the more violent tarantella, developed the athletic aspect. Although the two became rapidly blended, to this day the French style accentuates grace, the Italian technique. This history is not merely an isolated account of old happenings, but something that serves to explain the current scene. It is impossible to isolate the historical background from the aesthetic.

There is in every art a struggle between technique and artistry, the means and the end, the story to be told and the grammar and

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary.

## DEVELOPMENT OF BALLET COSTUME



PRE-CAMARGO.



CAMARGO.



ROMANTIC COSTUME.



THE CLASSIC "TUTU."

words used in its telling. Camargo had found a new liberty, and for some time this new liberty proved so intoxicating that dancing became more or less confined to the marvels that could be accomplished by the legs and feet, hidden for so many years. Far-seeing critics of the period wrote that dancing had become so little expressive of anything dramatic that puppets and machines might easily replace dancers. The ballets of the time consisted of a series of danced entrances, scarcely connected by any idea; what we today term a *divertissement*<sup>1</sup> to distinguish it from a ballet. The means was so novel and entertaining that the end was totally forgotten, a state of things that will recur constantly in this history. *The history of ballet consists of periods of intense technical discovery and development, and then a pause during which some master-mind codifies these discoveries and shows their true use as an art form.*

## (II)

The first of these master-minds, a major influence up to the present moment, was J. G. Noverre.

Born in 1727, Noverre is said to have been the son of an aide-de-camp of Charles XII, and destined for a military career. There is much doubt about the exact biographical details. He early became a pupil of Louis Dupré, and made his début at the age of sixteen. His first great success as a choreographer was *Fêtes Chinoises*, with décors by François Boucher. He was summoned to Drury Lane by David Garrick, and the great actor, who flatteringly called him "the Shakespeare of the dance," undoubtedly had a strong influence on his work and outlook. Owing to the outbreak of hostilities between France and England on the first night of his London season, he was forced to beat a hasty retreat. This misfortune was typical of his whole life. As a man of choleric disposition he found it difficult to settle down, in spite of a success that won him the esteem of Voltaire and others, and for fifty years he wandered all over Europe, spreading his ideas through his example and more especially through his famous *Lettres sur la Danse*, published in 1760, a manifesto on the art of ballet valued for all time. We can trace the influence, not only of his letters, but of his ballets and of his teaching.

The theme of his letters may be summarised very roughly as

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary.

## THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

follows: dancing like painting must be inspired by Nature. The choreographer is like a painter and must follow similar laws of composition. If ballet is degenerate, it is because, like fireworks, it has been content to remain a pleasure for the eyes alone. Steps have become a meaningless formula. This is not the fault of the art itself. *The well-composed ballet should be a living painting of the drama, character, and customs of mankind; it must be acted, as moving in its effect as a declamation, so that it can speak through the eyes to the soul.* The laws of drama apply to ballet, which must have an introduction, a development, and a climax. If one had to summarise the teaching of Noverre in one sentence—I strongly advise all dancers to turn to his letters—that sentence would be: *Ballet is not an excuse for dancing; dancing in ballet is the means of expressing a dramatic idea.*

I will analyse and comment on this teaching at some greater length in the section on the æsthetic of ballet. From the point of view of history it is sufficient to say that ballet as an art flourished when Noverre's precepts were remembered and acted upon and declined when they were forgotten.

Another great *maitre de ballet* and theorist, Angiolini, had an acrimonious pamphlet debate with Noverre on the subject of dramatic ballet, and it is worth mentioning one of his points, which is of great practical value. He attacks the long written programme explanations of Noverre's ballets, which are indeed heavy and uninspired, maintaining that a ballet is a self-confessed failure if it requires a programme explanation to make it clear, a point that Fokine has reiterated throughout his career.

As an active worker Noverre's influence was the greatest at Stuttgart, where he remained for eight years in charge of a company of a hundred *corps de ballet* and twenty principals, placed at his disposal by the art-loving Duke of Württemburg, Charles Eugene. "You are a Prometheus," Voltaire told him; "you must form men and breathe life into them." Stuttgart became a centre of ballet activity, and the greatest dancers of the day flocked there to appear in Noverre's productions, among them the great Vestris, Heinel, Dauberval, and Gardel.

Each one of these dancers has played an important role in the development of ballet which it is not necessary to trace here. Mademoiselle Heinel invented and launched the *pirouette*,<sup>1</sup> which Jardel and Vestris perfected, and they in their turn developed

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary.

the *rond de jambes*.<sup>1</sup> Today, ballet would be inconceivable without these movements in its repertoire. One of Noverre's most slashing attacks, implicit in his wish to develop pantomime, was made on the mask, which it was customary for dancers to wear. This was abolished almost accidentally by Gardel, who, substituting at the last moment for Vestris, made it a condition that he should appear without a mask and did so with striking success.

(III)

The most notable *ballerina* of this period, famous right up to the French Revolution and after, was Madeleine Guimard, "La Guimard," who fulfilled all that Noverre expected of a dancer, subordinating technique to dramatic expression. The French Revolution brought a temporary halt to the development of ballet in France, though under the Terror the social dance flourished. The centre of interest became focused in Italy once again, where two brilliant men turned thoughts towards ballet and away from opera.

The first, Salvatore Vigano, 1769-1821, a nephew of the composer Boccherini and through his master Dauberval in contact with Noverre's ideals, was a man of wide knowledge, who composed the music for his own ballets, which have been highly praised by Stendhal; too highly, he ranked them higher than Shakespeare. He greatly developed the use of the *corps de ballet* in the modern sense of the word, as an *ensemble* of individuals and not merely as a symmetrical background. Noverre had constantly railed against the deadly symmetry of the *corps de ballet*. Vigano's works and the trouble in France brought the leading French dancers to Milan, preparing the way for the second great *maitre de ballet*. Carlo Blasis, 1803, a pupil of Gardel and Dauberval, is with Noverre the biggest figure in the development of ballet. In his *Treatise on the Art of Dancing*, he summed up and codified what was known, and his system is, in its broad principles, the one in use today. He is the father of classical ballet technique. He paid tribute to Noverre's æsthetic, remarking that only the technical portions were out of date. He was a keen student of sculpture and anatomy, and so lucid a writer that he was able to make clear for all time the mechanical basis of ballet technique. His best-known "invention" is the *attitude*,<sup>1</sup> derived from Gian Bologna's Mercury.

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary.

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Both Noverre and Blasis stress the importance of a knowledge of painting and sculpture for the dancer. Their modern counterparts today, Fokine and Massine, are essentially museum men, as their compositions reveal, but museum men with an understanding, as Noverre insists, of the life that goes on around them. Blasis was a universal genius, a writer, and student of every type of art as well as of politics. His influence on the ballet is a powerful proof that it is not sufficient for the dancer just to dance.

As valuable as his writings was the foundation of the great Academy of Dancing at Milan in 1837, a hundred and seventy-six years after the foundation of the French Academy. His rules have become a model that every institution has tried to follow. Pupils were not admitted before the age of eight or after the age of twelve; fourteen in the case of boys. They had to be medically sound and of good stock. Their training was fully mapped out: three hours' practice a day and one hour of mime. They were attached to the school for eight years, and after that their future was assured by an ascending scale of salaries.

*This should do away with the superstition that it is necessary to start ballet training at the age of five, six, or even earlier—a superstition that must have caused, and is still causing, untold damage.* A parent who takes her baby to ballet class is an idiot; the teacher who receives her something very much worse. The baby can learn dancing, but only eurhythmics or something of the kindergarten type that is both healthy and of musical value. Apart from the physical damage, the mental effect of rigid ballet discipline at an early age is deplorable, killing originality, spontaneity, and the essential joy of dancing. The great Russian ballerinas, who have set the standards for future generations, started without exception at the age of ten. This is but one of the practical lessons of ballet history.

Every boy and girl today who perform their arduous exercises at the *barre*<sup>1</sup> and in the centre are paying an unconscious tribute to the science of the great master, Carlo Blasis. Many of the teachers today, both Russian and English, are closely descended from him, since his pupil Giovanni Lepri taught Enrico Cecchetti, master of the Russian Ballet, and of so many English lancers. The thought is an inspiring one. The smallest pupil should have some conception of the dignity and history of her art.

<sup>1</sup> See Glossary.

## (iv)

The period that is best known to the layman through beautiful coloured lithographs that survive is that of the ballet. These delicately tinted, highly idealised pictures great *ballerinas* Taglioni, Cerrito, Elssler, Grisi, G dekorate the rooms of so many of the dancers of today could be so revealing. Cerrito floats over a waterfall walks among the tree-tops to gather a nest, move meadow without disturbing a blade of grass. There to suggest movement, never muscles. These charming tell of an age of extreme artificiality, where the dance exploit a new aesthetic, a period of great dancers idols public, who forgot the art of ballet in their enthusiasm individual. The romantic ballet began in a blaze of in a comparatively short time burnt itself out, until only a serious public for ballet remained.

Noverre had postulated a close contact with romanticism denied it. The main influence of the period was not a dancer at all but a poet, Théophile Gautier, fact that has a very important bearing on the development of the ballet.

The romantic ballet was one aspect of a whole movement swept over France and the rest of Europe, beginning in 1830. Its idols were Heine and Walter Scott, its greatest painter the drama of Victor Hugo, the painting of Delacroix, and the music of Berlioz. "Banish reality," said the romantics; "let us escape into an enchanted realm." Revolution conceived romantically, as in Delacroix' great painting "Barricades"; only later was it to be viewed solely as in economics, persecution, protective custody, and man's fate. The ballet, ever a sensitive instrument in the hands of the ballet that created a world of illusion, however, if it was handled, was ideal for the spread of romantic ideas. The fairy, the wili, the witch, and the vampire swept away the heroes of antiquity, the pale German moonlight of Olympus. Man was no longer the hero, gone was the Vestris; woman was idealised, and man must be remain in the background and lift her when necessary. The conception that upset the whole orchestration of dancing

## THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the early seventeenth century ballet was exclusively a male art, in the early eighteenth century man was on sufferance. The romantics could not interfere too strenuously in the technique of dancing, but, since the dancer was almost an immortal, the technique did not greatly interest Gautier, and at times he spoke slightly of it, though as a critic he was too great to admit indifferent work. The one great technical development of the period was the use of the tips of the toes—*les pointes*—the ideal taking-off position for flight. Ever since the discovery of the points they have been abused, and, more than anything, have brought the art of ballet into disrepute with thinking people. I shall have a great deal to say about this when I come to analyse technique.

The central figure of the period is a non-dancer, Théophile Gautier, but the *maitre de ballet* who translated its ideals was Philippe Taglioni, important both as choreographer and father and teacher of the great Marie Taglioni. None of his ballets has survived. From all accounts his early ones were of considerable interest, while his later work degenerated into a formula that finally killed romanticism.

Marie Taglioni was a great dancer, unusual in her extraordinary frailty, that gave her an ethereal appearance. She is considered the leader of romanticism; her ballet *La Sylphide* stood for a manifesto of the movement, yet from all accounts she was more purely classical than romantic, which presupposes a certain flamboyance that her rival Elssler possessed. Taglioni has been called “the first Christian dancer,” so free from sex appeal was her art, and slightly hostile critics even reproached her with being a dancer for women.

The fierce rivalry between Taglioni and Elssler did much to popularise ballet by fanning the spirit of partisanship that is known in every gallery queue today—and in the stalls. Of all the great dancers of that period the one closest to us is surely Carlotta Grisi, creator of the role of *Giselle*, a ballet that is in the permanent repertoire both of our own Sadler's Wells and the Opéra, Paris. It has survived close on a hundred years, the only romantic ballet to reach us intact. *La Sylphide* belongs to legend; its name is very charmingly suggested in a new romantic ballet that has rid itself of the conventional trappings and retained the spirit, but *Giselle* is fact. It links Grisi, Pavlova, Karsavina, Pessivtseva,<sup>1</sup> and our own Margot Fonteyn; Paris, St. Peters-

<sup>1</sup> In Western Europe abbreviated to Spessiva.

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burg, and London. If from our experience we talk of romantic ballet, it is *Giselle* we mean. I will analyse it at some length as a type of ballet, but this is the context from which it comes.

With the decline of the great dancers of the period, the popularity of ballet rapidly waned; for without these great dancers what remained? The principles of Noverre were utterly forgotten, ballet was no longer an art but a spectacle for the eye of the tired business man, and the Edwardian business man could be tired, although the phrase did not yet exist. The ballet no longer interested serious musicians. The turning out of ballet music had become an industry. In every branch of art, romanticism was being brushed aside by realism, in its turn to be ousted by impressionism. The ballet had been one of the means of expression of a movement no longer in vogue. The male dancer scarcely existed; just row upon row of pretty, grinning, well-corseted girls, a *foyer de la danse* where the elegants could meet and flirt with them in the intervals, and a number of "rats"—as the members of the Paris Opéra *corps de ballet* were called—whose greatest justification was to serve as models for the master Degas.

Two hundred years after the founding of the Academy, ballet in the country of its birth was artistically bankrupt. The art that had been raised by a powerful dynasty of kings, nourished by the genius of a Boucher, Boquet, Lully, Molière, dignified by the interest of a Voltaire, that had produced men of the mental attainments of a Noverre, had become merely a prelude to flirtation, the dancers *grisettes* and expert gold-diggers. It is well for us to remember that this occurred but a decade or two after one of the greatest booms in its history, when the attitude of the audience was very close to what it is today.

The same was the case in England. The popularity of the romantic ballet had spread from Paris. London was noted for the warmth of its audiences. Théophile Gautier viewed them with a certain amount of suspicion. He was not willing to accept a London reputation without a severe test. There were English dancers, but these were minor figures, the most famous being Adelina Plunkett and the ill-fated Clara Webster, burned to death when her dress caught fire on the stage at Drury Lane. In England, without a State institution to maintain at any rate the technical tradition, the fate of ballet was still worse. It became a popular feature of the music-hall programme, packing

## THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

the Empire and the Alhambra. Many of the dancers were excellent, among them Adeline Genée, Lydia Kyasht, and our own Phyllis Bedells; but the ballets themselves would scarcely have won the approval of Noverre. They were the exact type of thing from which Fokine was revolting, but without the academic purity that was some justification. The ballet was rescued from this lamentable fall by the Russians, who invaded Paris in 1909 and London two years later, to remain in occupation ever since.

(v)

The history of ballet in Russia belongs to the past, and is in its right place here; the history of Russian Ballet belongs to the present, and probably, if the present-day Russians will learn the meaning of the word *collaboration*, to the future.

There is a mention of Russian dancers at the court of Louis XIV, when some "Muscovites" came to learn the art and gravely displeased their teachers by their lack of attention. Dancing, however, received its first great impetus at the time of Peter the Great, 1672-1725. It was a part of his general policy to Westernise Russia, bound up with his costume reforms and with his forcing of the boyars to shave their beards. We have already seen the intimate link between costume and dance. This is but one more vivid proof. Dancing is the most positive and striking expression of the national characteristics of a people. Change their dances and you may change their mentality. In Russia the women were kept apart from the men. Introduce social dances, routs, and assemblies, make them compulsory, and Eastern seclusion must give way to Westernisation. Peter the Great realised this just as Kemal Ataturk has today. Shave the men's beards, remove their dignified and cumbersome robes, and they become eligible partners for the dance. It may be necessary to imprison a few, to antagonise the Church. No matter. Peter was a dictator, and one of his aims was to impose upon a backward people the social dance of the West. The theatrical art of ballet has grown out of the social dance; the steps originally performed for pleasure are the basis of the classical ballet. In Russia ballet followed the same evolution, more rapidly because there were examples from abroad. Peter forced the art of his country into a new channel, just as he forced the armament by land and sea. Where the present-day dictators

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in Italy and Germany think nationally, Peter, in every way a more enlightened man, had vision enough to think internationally and to borrow what was best from abroad, until he had planted it firmly in his country: painting, architecture, fashions, the army and navy. By so doing, he permanently enriched his country instead of impoverishing it in the present-day fashion. . . . *Alas, poor Salzburg!*

In the succeeding reigns under foreign guidance the art of ballet began to be planted in a country now conscious of the meaning of dancing. The Empress Anne (1693-1740) founded the Academy, which survives today under a different régime, importing a Frenchman, Landé, to direct it, and thinking it of sufficient importance to include dancing in the curriculum of the cadets. The Empress Elizabeth, a great beauty, was herself fond of dancing, and brought over an Austrian *maitre de ballet*, Hilferding, with many of the latest works.

It was with Catherine the Great (1762-1796) that the most intense development took place. Le Picq, a Frenchman, and the great Italian Angiolini came to her court and spread both knowledge and enthusiasm.

Ballet might well have remained a popular and "borrowed" art, as it had done in England, but for one factor that distinguishes the history of Russian Ballet.

England enjoyed the art. The greatest dancers from abroad visited London and filled their pockets. Yet there was never a trace of a native English ballet until the present day. England remained "good audience" throughout. Russia began to dance. This may be partly due to historical reasons. During the reigns of Henry VIII and Elizabeth the court enjoyed elaborate masks, but the growth of Protestantism in its puritanical form meant the decay of Merrie England, and one of the most musical of nations became a consumer instead of a creator.

In Russia the court set the example and the people followed. The geography of Russia is responsible. The nobles possessed vast estates and quantities of serfs at their command, slaves of the same creed and race, who were not given their freedom until 1861. So large and remote were these estates that it was necessary for the nobles to provide their own comforts and amusements. The Empress favoured ballet, her courtiers followed suit. They trained their serfs and formed ballet troupes of their own. The whole Russian theatre owes its origin to the serf

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actors. This meant that ballet became a part of the people, not merely an entertainment provided from without. In Russia, ballet had a greater contact with humanity than in any other country. It could not be destroyed, as it had been in France, by any wave of artificiality; it could not become the very passive instrument of a group of poets. The peasant is by nature a realist, and Russian Ballet, even in its most romantic phases, has always retained, comparatively speaking, a close touch with reality.

Bit by bit these private troupes became merged in the central organisations of St. Petersburg and Moscow, the dancers so selected gaining their freedom before the general emancipation of the serfs. The ballet school started as a system of patronage, but ended with rules as strict as those laid down by Carlo Blasis for Milan. The ballet became the most cherished possession of the Emperor, who lavished immense sums upon its maintenance.

From the time of Catherine onwards, the history of Russian Ballet consists of the gradual absorption of foreign knowledge by the Russians themselves until the art is indigenous and Russian Ballet alone exists as an active creative artistic force, producing its own Noverre, its own Blasis, its own Lully, its own Boquet. The succession of foreign visitors: Didelot, who had the greatest scholastic influence; Dupré, and Taglioni, who had the most enthusiastic triumph of her career, left not merely pleasant memories but a tradition that was assimilated. Russian dancers began to make a reputation, among them Andreyanova, who danced *Giselle* very shortly after its creation, the tragic Daniłova and Istomina, sung by Russian poets.

Soon the stage is dominated by Russian *ballerinas*, Sokolova and Vasem being outstanding, though the guidance is in the hands of three foreigners, two of whom became completely Russianised.

Ballet in Russia became Russian Ballet through Marius Petipa, a Frenchman, Gustave Johannsen, a Dane, and Enrico Cecchetti, an Italian. The account of their influence belongs rightly to the modern scene, but before developing the story of modern ballet and introducing the major figures in contemporary ballet, it will be necessary to analyse the art itself and to postulate certain standards. Only in this way can we appreciate what is happening at the present moment.

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## CHAPTER THREE

### THE AESTHETIC BACKGROUND

*Criticism—A definition of ballet—The dancers; their attributes—Technique—The border-line between acrobatics and dancing—Types of dancer—The choreographer; definition of choreography; his attributes; nature of his art—Music and its possible relations to movement—The décor and its function—The literary element; theme and narrative—Aesthetics and economics—The making of a dancer: in practice—Outlets for the dancer: ballet clubs, examinations, and competitions.*

THE criticism of the ballet was highly developed during the formative period, both by dancers and encyclopædisti. Up till the time of Théophile Gautier, it continued as a serious subject for study. Gautier's impressions of dancers are so vivid that we can discuss Taglioni, Eissler, Grisi, and Grahn almost as if we had seen them. Ballet came to be considered as too frivolous for serious attention only during the decay of romanticism, when it left the opera house for the music hall. The naughty 'nineties and the traditional draught of champagne in the dancer's slipper are difficult memories to live down, obliterating the memory of such *balletomanes* as Voltaire and Stendhal. In Russia, where ballet never sank so low, there were many remarkable writers on the subject, starting with Volinsky, who learnt to dance at the age of seventy, Plestchaeff, Svetloff, and André Levinson. They not only interpreted the finer points of the art to the public, but acted as mentors to the dancers themselves. Their criticism was both respected and feared.

In Western Europe, since the advent of Diaghileff, ballet almost took its place once again as a serious and respectable subject; the champagne-filled slipper was given a rest. However, in England and France ballet criticism became the exclusive property of the music critic, and music is but one part of ballet. The dramatic critic, the art critic, or a critic of dancing might consider that they had equal claims. Though of them all the music critic is probably the closest to ballet, as a specialist he may well be biased; and while he influences public opinion, his other important function of influencing the dancers themselves is gone.

This difficulty of finding the appropriate critic will show us as

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a start the complex nature of our study. The would-be critic is still further handicapped by the fact that he has no score or printed word to which he can refer. He must rely upon eyes and memory, pass a judgment on music, choreography, dancing, décors and costumes, drama, and the combined effect of all these things together, for ballet is a combination of these elements. When he has noticed all these things he has a good half-hour in which to condense his opinions into two hundred and fifty words.

To understand ballet we must analyse each separate element, and we meet with an initial difficulty: that of where to begin. They are by no means in watertight compartments. It will be necessary for the critic to affix little labels here and there purely for the sake of convenience. Ballet is a particularly difficult subject about which to write, since it is quite impossible to make quotations.

It seems safest to start with a definition. I suggest the following: *Ballet is a form of theatrical entertainment that tells a story, develops a theme, or suggests an atmosphere through the orchestration of a group of costumed dancers trained according to strict rules and guided in tempo and spirit by the music, against a decorative background; music, movement, and decoration being parallel in thought.*

What a cumbersome formula for anything so simply and obviously beautiful as *Les Sylphides*, or for anything so deeply and obviously moving as *Petrouchka*! Yet an examination of this kind can bring out fresh beauties in each work by insisting on a certain standard of performance.

Let us start with the dancers, those partners in the composite whole that is ballet who are nearest to the audience, who interpret the music, the idea, and the choreography, and who wear the costumes.

### (A) THE DANCERS

Dancers vary enormously in physique, type, and temperament, but there are certain attributes that all require.

The first essential is a suitable physique. I hesitate for the moment to use the word beauty, though it is an obvious advantage, because beauty is altogether too vague a word. The modern sex appeal, too, is not accurate. One cannot and should not rule out sex from ballet, but the difference between ballet and

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some other forms of dancing is that they deliberately exploit sex while ballet does not, unless the theme of the work calls for it. Some superficial, smart-aleck or disordered minds have seen in the present-day craze for ballet nothing but sex, an altogether too easy judgment. For some types of mind the sex appeal of the dancers may be an inducement to visit the ballet, but they will find it in a far more practical and concentrated form in cabaret and non-stop variety, and are scarcely likely to become *balletomanes* on that score. The dancer requires the type of charm that a fair number of her audience will call beauty, and for a very obvious reason. Her face and her body are the instrument upon which she plays. While a violinist may possess both genius and technique, no one will be aware of the fact if his fiddle is poor in quality. He will spend thousands upon a Stradivarius or an Amati; the dancer must be born with the perfect instrument and develop it by training.

We have seen from our historical background that it is wrong to consider dancing purely from the point of view of the movements of the legs. The dancer must be completely expressive from head to foot. *The face is as much a part of the dancer's instrument as the feet and arms.* Many a dexterous performer is of no artistic significance through an adenoidal expression and a hanging jaw. Oh, those Sylphides with their permanent air of acute bellyache, mixture of boredom and stupidity! Many a technical shortcoming has been compensated for by an expressive face that holds the attention. There are many hundreds today in the dancing schools who are doomed to disappointment, because they have not had the good fortune to be built as dancers.

Under the heading of physical aptitude, I would include natural grace. The highly developed technical ballet dancer is by no means necessarily graceful. The highly trained dancer's manner of walking is often flippantly known as "the *ballerina* waddle," a penguin-like method of locomotion. Technique can always be acquired, grace and ease of movement but rarely. Faulty teaching may ruin natural grace. *One of the aims of teaching is not merely to add something to the pupil, but to take advantage of what is there already.* Had quantity and not quality been the aim, Pavlova might never have had the opportunity of enchanting us with her art. Hers was a particular case, and every worthwhile dancer is a particular case, with an

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individual physique that must be studied and especially fitted into the classical framework. There is no infallible system, there are fortunately a few inspired teachers.

The next point to be considered is the pupil's musicality. It is obvious that she must possess an ear for rhythm. That is unfortunately the exclusive sense in which the musicality of dancers is usually considered. It is the bare minimum requirement without which the dancer is not fitted to appear at all. Its higher sense, the one which distinguishes the *corps de ballet* dancer from the *ballerina*, lies in a far more subtle understanding and appreciation of musical content and atmosphere. *The music speaks to the dancer, the dancer interprets the music to the audience.* This will become clearer if I lay down a parallel with the legitimate stage. There the actress interprets the plot and idea of an author with words chosen by that author. The dancer interprets a choreographer's idea with movements devised by the choreographer, but an idea that never comes to life unless she receives guidance from the music. Let us take the extreme case of a completely plotless ballet, *Les Sylphides*, which contains the essence of romanticism with none of its hobgoblin trappings. There is nothing to guide the dancer here save the music. She is performing certain rhythmic movements, but that is not enough. She must convey to her audience a particular atmosphere. For that reason only the truly musical dancer can succeed in interpreting *Les Sylphides*, one of the most frequently performed yet most rarely interpreted of all ballets. It is when ballet is understood in the Noverre-Fokine sense of the word that the dancer needs true musicality. During the degeneracy of ballet, when music is merely an accompaniment, the dancer requires but a good ear and a dramatic sense that is something apart. In the musical ballet, as distinct from the ballet with music, the ability to act and the ability to understand music are very closely linked together. The next point to be considered, therefore, is the ability to mime.

We have seen the importance assigned to this in our historical survey and the early distinction between the merely technical performer and the truly interpretative artist. Miming in dancing sets a difficult problem. It is, as we have seen, often closely associated with a musical sense; it is also rigidly controlled by the movements assigned to the dancer. Mime in ballet varies from the purely conventional sign language of the romantic

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period ballet (hand on heart means love) to the skilled acting of the Fokine dance dramas. It must never be thought of as something superimposed on to the movements of the dance, but as a part of the dancing itself. Miming that forces itself on the attention is bad, usually showing that the face is making a violent effort to compensate for the shortcomings of the body. When I come to deal with type ballets I will consider the isolated and exceptionally important case of *Giselle*. While this calls for very definite interpretation, every role in ballet requires mime, even when the *ballerina* is most herself in some sparkling virtuoso variation.

The other attributes required by the dancer before we come to discuss the problem of technique are simpler to imagine, more difficult to describe on paper.

Personality is a common attribute required in every artistic pursuit. In dancing it means style, movement that is controlled by the mind, instead of being a physical reaction prompted by classroom habit. Once again we are led back to music. *Personality in dancing, among other things, implies an individual reaction to the meaning of the music as against the muscular reaction inspired by the rhythm of the music.* It is astonishing to what a degree the dancer can become a puppet devoid of all personality, and yet earn tremendous applause from a public that can count up to fifty.

I distrust profoundly all superficial use of that much-abused word "temperament," usually employed by the English public in its sexual significance, to point out the artistic shortcomings of the English girl. There is nothing more deceitful than an assumed temperament that consists in making oneself seen and heard at all costs by a number of deliberate and unworthy tricks. It has proved the undoing of more than one dancer, who deceives a certain number of people part of the time. The Spanish dance is the one usually martyred by dancers who think a great deal about temperament: usually the English girl with an inferiority complex. *Temperament in dancing, if it implies anything that can be analysed, means natural vivacity and self-confidence, something that is felt with such sincere conviction that it becomes a burning necessity to convey it across the footlights.* In that sense it is an indispensable attribute that cannot be learnt. Let us be original and omit its customary sexual implications. Girls of all nations have lovers.

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Intelligence is another attribute that the dancer of today more than ever requires. In the past the dancer received a true education as distinct from physical training. Music, painting, and the meaning of her art were analysed for her by experienced teachers. She faced her audience with some knowledge of what she was doing, a positive consciousness of the structure of which she formed a part. The present-day dancer, for reasons chiefly economic, is trained purely acrobatically. If she is to survive as an artist, it becomes vital for her to form a background of her own. The Maryinsky *ballerina* can discuss ballet; the average young dancer of today, steps. (A love of gossip is common to both, and to critics as well.) Lack of intelligence plus a lack of education condemns the dancer after a burst of precocity to complete artistic sterility.

I have purposely left all consideration of technique to the end. It is a complex subject that will need a quantity of convenient labels. *Technique is a means and never an end.* Most ballet dancers, and through them all the opponents of ballet, never realise that fact. It is vital and should be printed on a placard in every schoolroom in the kingdom and solemnly intoned before the class. The numerous exams that are the goal of most teachers and pupils in England completely obscure that fact, making technique the end. Perhaps the exams are not to blame; there is much to be said for them, but their application and the attitude of the teachers is usually indefensible. Technique is sufficient when it enables the dancer to express with fluency both herself and the role she is undertaking. If she or her public worry about the technique, it is clearly insufficient. *Technique does not mean the performance, however perfect, of isolated steps.* The artist-dancer does not think in terms of steps, but conceives the dance as a whole, melting one step into the next. The dancer who reveals the join between the steps; the staccato dancer, and ninety per cent. are, is as bad as the actor who stammers. Unfortunately, the public usually mistakes the staccato dancer, who underlines her difficulties, for the brilliant dancer. Applause is only too often a sign of the consciousness that something difficult has just been attempted. The truly moving passage is received with the rare compliment of silence before the final burst of applause. Unrestrained and unreasoning applause have been extremely damaging, especially in the beginning at Sadler's Wells, where the dancers were making a strong effort

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to sort out their knowledge of the art. There, applause revealed a strong tendency to become merely partisan. Sporting, perhaps, but unsound. The audience is showing marked improvement of late.

It is necessary here to pause and consider the difference between virtuoso dancing and acrobatics. Opponents of ballet as a system, such as Isadora Duncan, can see no difference, and often in practice there is no difference. *The difference between dancing and acrobatics lies not so much in technique as in a state of mind.*

It is possible for the same movements to be performed to the same music by two different individuals and in one case to be pure dancing, in the other case acrobatics.

The pure dancer performs his steps, however complex, with the conception of the dance as a whole, being guided by the music, concealing his difficulties, and making his climax an artistic one. He is depicting a definite idea.

The acrobat performs his steps in such a fashion as to underline the difficulty of the task. In his case the drama is implicit in the physical performance. He is putting a question to the audience: "Will I get through without a tumble or not?" He is telling them: "Look, I am creating a record number of turns. Will I reach fifty?" That is the only idea behind his performance. His climax consists of a dazzling finish to whip up applause. There is relief in this climax that he has succeeded in overcoming his difficulties. It is like the singer of patriotic or Mother ballads who at the conclusion lifts his hat and waits.

In the first case the audience murmurs: "How beautiful"; in the second case: "How clever."

We shall see that in certain cases, especially in bad periods, the choreographer places an enormous onus on the dancer to steer clear of acrobatics, using difficulties just because they are difficult.

This consideration of technique is important just because the average ballet dancer is incompetent to defend ballet, either through words or dancing, against ill-informed attacks. The playing of the piano is well enough understood as an art for no one to utter such an absurd statement as: "These eternal finger exercises are unnatural and dangerous to all self-expression. Let us throw overboard this elaborate technique and find something natural and simple." Obviously absurd, but then virtuoso

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pianists have never been considered as particularly frivolous (no one has ever drunk out of their slippers), and, in spite of the popularity of ballet, dancers are still very much misunderstood and not accorded the status they deserve. The system of classical ballet is merely a physical training. There is nothing particularly beautiful in standing on one toe or in turning on that toe a given number of times. There is nothing particularly beautiful about a five-finger exercise. Beauty only comes later in the use to which these things are put. Neither is unnatural in the sense that both can be acquired with ease by the average person; both are unnatural in the sense that all art is unnatural and must be acquired through practice. It is through a misconception of technique that natural movement is always invoked in opposition to ballet. There is only one reply to this: ballet training is comprehensive, other dance training limited. The ballet dancer can perform every type of work: Spanish in *Le Chapeau Tricorne*, Russian in *Prince Igor*, Oriental in *Scheherazade*, Greek in *Daphnis and Chloe*; note that in not one of these ballets is the tip of the toe used at all.

The reason why the independent dancer of the Wigman type can make such a good argument on paper is a superior and bolder intelligence and education. In her devotion to a system the average ballet dancer has ceased to think at all, possessing neither taste nor discrimination. The Duncan or the Wigman, in elaborating a personal system, is compelled to study music, costume, and the meaning of movement. I do not for a moment claim that the great dancer must come out of the classical system. But what I do say is that the great independent dancer would be greater still if she had absorbed the classical system. There has always been a singular monotony in the work that has grown out of so-called natural methods; also in most cases the results have been so very personal that there remained nothing to transmit to pupils. The Pavlova of the *Bacchanal* met Duncan on her own ground, but she was also the Pavlova of *La Perl*, the *Dying Swan*, and that delicious nothing, *Noël*. Had Duncan possessed the fortifying discipline of technique, she would never have presented the pathetic and terrifying picture of her last days. She would either have been in a fit state to continue, or by measuring herself against a known quantity, she would have realised the ruin she had become.

*Technique is a known quantity by which the dancer can measure*

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*Technique is a known quantity by which the dancer can measure*

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*herself. A personally evolved technique, however complex, cannot serve that all-important function.*

Dancing that gets its inspiration from ancient Greece is also popular today, and doubtless it is of distinct benefit as physical education. So is hockey. (Both have a thickening effect on the ankles.) Its artistic pedigree will not bear close examination. The dance rests on music. There is no one today who can tell us much about Greek music. To perform movements lifted from a Greek vase to the music of Chopin or Brahms is clearly not performing a Greek dance. The ballet has used on occasions the inspiration of Greek movement, but there is insufficient there to establish a whole technique, and the ballet technique has served its purpose admirably. It is necessary to have a very profound knowledge both of dancing and of choreography to knit the static movements on pottery and bas-relief into a connected whole. It is not sufficient to be photographed in draperies, draped round the Parthenon. Ballet technique may have its faults, but it does provide a tested and extended knowledge of the possibilities of the human body. It is necessary to state once again that a knowledge of that technique in practice must not be the exclusive aim of teachers and their pupils. The dancing rebels do provide one fine ingredient—thought. There is a close parallel here with the unlicensed medical practitioner.

It is not generally realised by the layman that just as there are types of singer—soprano, mezzo-soprano, and contralto—there are types of dancer. The dancer belongs to one type or another by reason both of her physique and, to a lesser degree, of her personality. Physique and personality are closely connected. In our everyday life the beauty is usually sure of herself.

The much-abused term “*ballerina*” has a very positive meaning. In State institutions it is a definite rank in the hierarchy of ballet, just as “*general*” is a rank that cannot be assumed at will; artistically and in practice, it means the dancer who assumes the leading role in classical ballets. The classical ballet will need elaborating in its proper place. I mentioned the difficulty at the beginning of this section of knowing exactly where to begin.

I can best define the classical dancer by discussing interpretation. All ballet training is classical, depending on the system codified by Carlo Blasis. That system is used for a variety of different ends: to express a positive role; to indicate an atmos-

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sphere; to interpret the national dance of some particular country. In the classical ballet the role is subordinated to the technique. Therefore, the *classical dancer holds us by her line and fluency and not by her interpretation of anything positive*. As we have seen, classicism and acrobatics could be considered as very nearly related. I have defined the essential differences. In classical ballet an enormous responsibility rests upon the dancer. She cannot hide behind her role. The music indicates the tempo, the choreographer the movement, the dancer is free, within limits which must be carefully appreciated, to express herself. It is she who must give meaning to what she is doing, since the story is told only every now and then by conventional gesture. The pleasure in watching classical ballet lies in the beauty of line and in the revelation of personality. One dancer may make her *adagio* exciting, another dramatic, a third ethereal, a fourth more tender, and so on. It is only in a classical role that the dancer can be dissected both as a technician and as a personality. Even the costume of classical ballet, the rim of a hoop, the *tutu*,<sup>1</sup> as it is called, is mercilessly revealing, nearly always unbecoming, and wisely abolished by Fokine. No frills, no bluff, no hiding of physical, technical, or artistic imperfections. Classicism, because it is all-revealing, is the point of departure for dancers and audience. It is obvious that the requirements involved are so great that the true *ballerina* is a rarity. Just because her body is her instrument and it is impossible to acquire one save by birth, the *ballerina* is rarer than the concert pianist or the violinist. There are no more than a half-dozen of front rank in a generation.

The good classical *ballerina*, unless she is limited in her mind to the interpretation of purely classical roles, has the necessary equipment to dance nearly every type of role. She is all-inclusive.

The next division, by far the largest and most common, is that of *demi-caractère*. Here, the technique required is identical, its use is different. The *demi-caractère* dancer interprets a more definite role. As a *ballerina* her role invariably has a name; usually she is a Princess; but that role does not require much interpretation, the dancing alone is the focal point. In *demi-caractère* it is the role itself. The dancer is a Columbine (*Carnaval*), a soubrette (*Good-humoured Ladies*), and the interpretation of the role is essential to the story. The dancer can

<sup>1</sup> See illustration page 19.

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conceal herself behind a story and a costume. The choreographer assumes a greater responsibility, he is partly a dramatist. Since there are a variety of different roles and costumes, both mercifully concealing, the dancer does not require the perfect dignity and physique of the *ballerina*.

The third category is that of the character dancer who performs either the heavily mimed roles, the villains and comics of classical ballet, the grotesques (*Baba Yaga* in *Contes Russes*) or the national dances (*Prince Igor*, *The Three-cornered Hat*) of a particular country. England, having no national dances, is sadly lacking in character dancers of this type, though English dancers excel in the heavy mime of grotesque ballet (*The Rake's Progress*). The attributes I have outlined apply in a varying degree to each one of these categories. Karsavina excelled in all three—*The Swan Princess*, the *Columbine*, and the *Miller's Wife*. The outstanding young *ballerinas* of today, Irina Baronova and Margot Fonteyn, are also catholic in their capabilities.

At the present day the tendency is for all dancers to be *demi-caractère*. The classical ballet is a survival, unfamiliar to the average teacher, and the secret of forming the true *ballerina* belongs to but a few institutions and those teachers who have themselves been *ballerinas*.

### (B) THE CHOREOGRAPHER

*The choreographer* (clumsy word) is the person who, guided by the music selected, arranges the movements of the dancers, creating that part of ballet which is danced.

It is astonishing how mysterious this profession appears to the layman. Many who watch ballet for the first time imagine that the dances are improvisations; in other words, "just skipping about to the music," a phrase I have often heard. Even a learned judge and counsel in a recent case seemed to find some considerable difficulty in understanding the nature of the choreographer's art, and from various remarks that they let fall it was obvious that they considered it easy and of not much account, though they did eventually agree that it was susceptible to copyright. Actually, choreography is an extremely complex art, calling for exceptional knowledge, and the last fifty years have produced but a handful of choreographers whose work counts. Today, dancers and public in London, Paris, and New York rely on

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the work of Fokine, Massine, Nijinska, Balanchinè, Lifar, de Valois, and Ashton. The first four in this list have been active a very long time; Fokine since the beginning of the century. The greatest problem in ballet is that of the lack of choreographers. The reason will be clear when I have analysed the art itself.

To start with, there is no school of choreography or recognised method of training. There could not be, apart from the higher education of dancers in general. The choreographer is a dancer with a strong urge to express himself, the good fortune and the ability to be able to do so. He is born and developed, but not made in cold blood. The present writer receives a score of letters every month asking how to become a choreographer. There is no reply, even when stamps are enclosed.

The first essential is to be an active member of a ballet company, so steeped in the classical tradition that the desire for self-expression arises almost as a reaction against routine. It is necessary to be musical and to have a practical knowledge of music. It is necessary to understand painting and sculpture, both historically and aesthetically. It is necessary to understand the mechanism of the theatre and the spirit of the theatre. It is necessary to have a knowledge of human nature, the ability to inspire confidence and loyalty. Your dancers are like the artist's tubes of paint, with the great difference that they must be both willing and receptive. Is it to be wondered at that the true choreographer is a rarity? I must make it clear that this rarity does not imply that choreography as an art is equal to musical composition or painting. The rarity lies in the fact that *the choreographer, by the nature of his work, is half-way between the creative and the interpretative artist.*

There are many who arrange dances. To do that requires a certain technical skill, but it is an entirely different matter. To arrange a dance merely means the fitting of the ready-made phrases (*enchaînements*) of dancing into a connected whole. That is within the province of the good teacher. Choreography itself implies originality of expression.

One of the difficulties of choreography is its impermanence. In the early days, when the main feature of ballet was its geometric pattern, it was comparatively simple to fix the movements in a system of script. Even when the technique of ballet became far more extended but ballet meant two or three persons actually

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performing with the *corps de ballet* as a decorative background, the problem was an easy one, especially as the music was simple in rhythm. The movements of classical ballet were restricted to a framework that it is possible to describe in words so that a dance could practically be transmitted by post. Although there are a variety of systems of script, not one of them is of much practical use today. Imagine attempting to reduce to paper such a ballet as *Choreartium*, where there is no *corps de ballet*, but a large ensemble of individuals, where but a few of the movements of those individuals can be described in words at all, and where the music is a symphony by Brahms! The very idea of such a combined score of motion and music makes the head reel. Nijinsky, in the first throes of his madness, grappled with such a problem. The film alone could come to the rescue, a film that could analyse in slow motion, and already the cost of ballet is prohibitive. *Giselle* and *Swan Lake* survive on paper, but the modern ballets run the grave risk of complete annihilation. They exist only in the memory of their performers, and in this lies the strength and the weakness of the art. Some central bureau for the recording of ballet subsidised by the various companies seems an essential in the near future; a task perhaps for ballet's own museum, *Les Archives Internationales de la Danse* in Paris.

It is comparatively easy, by adopting some set of standards of the type I have outlined, to judge the individual dancer; extremely complicated to judge a ballet. There are so many factors to be considered. We must know something of the ballets that have gone before, and it is not always convenient to study several repertoires. It is impossible to form a very definite opinion, save of an obviously wretched work, except after several viewings. The musician will hear rather than see, the artist will study the grouping, the dancer the steps and their execution. For the average person it requires many visits to bring all these together. We can talk here only of essentials, and see later how they have been treated in a series of type ballets.

The first essential, that postulated by Noverre and reiterated by Fokine, is consistency of plausibility. Ballet is a convention, we have seen that from our definition. The word need not disturb us. All the art that surrounds us has its particular conventions, which for the most part, through extreme familiarity, we accept unquestioningly. Perspective in painting is a convention,

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the convention that the two-dimensional has three dimensions; the bronze bust is a convention, and we are not upset by the fact that the human head and shoulders are gold, chocolate, or green in colour. The theatre has its conventions. We accept a play as realistic in spite of the fact that there is no fourth wall and we have no right to be looking in on the drama. The cinema has still more conventions, accepted by the millions who are ignorant of the word and its meaning. It is possible to be moved by the plot of an opera or operette, if it is skilfully presented. When you go to the ballet you admit ballet's own particular conventions, but you demand from the producer that he himself respects them and is thoroughly consistent in his use of them. In *Le Spectre de la Rose* you are moved by the young girl returning from her first ball and beginning to day-dream and then to dream in her chair. The fact that no young girl just back from a dance actually settles down to dream to music does not for a moment disturb you. When her dream, the rose she has been given, comes to life and dances with her, you are moved by the poetry of the conception and you believe in what you are seeing. It has a truth of its own. But if that selfsame rose, instead of dancing lightly through the room, were to perform a vigorous Russian dance, you would be horrified and immediately lose your interest. The producer would in fact, be a liar. This is not an extreme case by any means. Ballets equally ridiculous have been produced, ballets in Oriental or Greek settings where dancers have twirled on their toes. You do not demand accurate Oriental or Greek dances; doubtless, if you saw them, you would not recognise them. But you do demand something that does not shock your common sense. You know that a houri or a Greek maiden did not wear ballet slippers. You would be prepared to accept such a thing only in a highly stylised work that made a virtue of extreme artificiality, imposing yet another convention. You would then be entertained rather than moved. The essential difference between ballet and opera, on paper so similar by analogy, is that opera continually offends through the figures of the singers: mountainous women dying of consumption, ugly women assuming the role of *femmes fatales*, fat head-waiterish tenors aping ardent young lovers. A part of Chaliapine's greatness was the truth he brought to opera.

Another essential linked with this is theatrical quality. Ballet which tells a story is a play which, as Noverre has told us, must

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unfold itself logically. Ballet is extremely limited in its choice of subject. Once it has found a suitable subject, that subject is susceptible of a variety of interpretations, actual and symbolical. It is possible to convey the fact that X loves Y, X hates Y. Then X may be Mars and Y Venus, X Mammon and Y Money, Power, and so on. The language of ballet is both restricted and extended. It is quite impossible to convey that X is Y's sister-in-law, and if the plot hinges on that fact, then the ballet is a failure. "There are a quantity of things," said Noverre, "that cannot be rendered intelligible through gesture. Everything that one terms quiet dialogue is unsuited to Pantomime."

The choreographer, therefore, must choose only a theme that is suitable for his medium, and he cannot rely on the programme synopsis to save him. The ballet must be complete in itself.

Another essential that is immediately obvious in every other art is that the choreography must be the expression of a definite personality. It is personality, as we have seen, that distinguishes choreography from the arrangement of dances, however skilful. To judge of the originality of a work it is necessary to have had considerable experience.

The choreographer must use movements that his company can perform to perfection. It is useless to compose a work that calls for a succession of steps that only one exceptional individual can perform, or that the dancers can succeed in but every few performances. A good ballet is susceptible to a variety of changes of cast. The disturbing idea that the dancers may not be able to fill the choreography is immediately destructive of all illusion.

Good choreography must not, however, be interesting only because it presents an interesting story, it must be interesting bit by bit, in itself, through the use of the technique itself. Classical ballet, as we have seen, stresses line and purity of execution rather than literary conception. All ballet must be interesting in line and pattern. The dramatic content is one thing, the composition another. The choreographer is a painter with a foreground, his principals, and a background, his *corps de ballet*. This is an exact parallel, but it cannot be carried any farther. It is comparatively easy to arrange effective groups. The choreographer's task consists in carrying the dancers from group to group. He is, in fact, painting thousands of different pictures,

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as a rapid camera will reveal. Each one of those pictures must in itself be harmonious. That is the essence of choreography.

To sum up, as far as we have gone, we have the following essentials: plausibility and a respect for truth; a subject that can be conveyed in pantomime; something original to say; a practical knowledge of technique; interest through the use of technique; a knowledge of composition.

These requisites are hard enough, but I have yet to tackle the core of the problem: the music.

### (C) THE MUSIC

Music in ballet can fulfil a variety of different functions. It can be the servant of choreography by merely accompanying movement, its most primitive use. It can be the master of choreography by setting the choreographer a problem, how best to devise movement that will interpret or parallel its thought. It can be the equal partner of choreography in which composer and choreographer jointly deal with a problem. It has been all these things. In the earliest days of ballet it is the equal partner: the choreographer is usually himself a musician. Then it degenerates into a mere accompaniment, a conception akin to the jungle tom-tom, or earlier still, the clapping of hands and the stamping of feet, the dancer providing his own accompaniment. The choreographer designates a tempo, the composer obliges. With the advent of Isadora Duncan and in the early Diaghileff period music is the master. The music is already written, the composer dead, and the choreographer must fit his movement to what exists without permitting himself any liberties.

Diaghileff's ideal was to restore the equal partnership of music and choreography, which he did in *The Firebird*, *Petrouchka*, and a whole succession of works.

At the present time music is alternately the partner and the master. Since the success of the symphonic ballets, usually the master.

It is impossible to lay down any hard-and-fast rules. Successful ballets have been created under each one of these systems. It is certain, however, that music composed for a definite purpose should in theory give the best results. Ballet is a whole in which the ingredients must be carefully balanced. Whatever

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the system adopted, it is essential for the choreographer to have a subtle and highly trained musical sense.

The question is often asked whether all music is suitable for dancing. There is a wrong viewpoint, survival of the notion that ballet is frivolous: that certain music is too sacrosanct to be touched. It is not a question of sentiment, but of fitness. Much music, by its structure, is quite unsuited for the dance. A dancer cannot perform a solo of more than a very limited duration; the music may call for mass action where the score calls for a solo, and so on. In using already-composed music there is a double risk: fitting a theme to it, fitting movement to it. Only in the case of the simplest or most formal music is it possible, or in music that has what Lambert, in an interesting essay, calls the quality of present action. Certain evocative music narrates and is physical, another type imagines. The distinctions are as real as direct and indirect speech, if less easy to define. However, the musical purist is apt to forget that ballet is theatre and must be judged by theatrical standards, although often his censure is true on paper, untrue in fact. I will discuss the subject of the symphonic ballets later. There is an interesting question as to the legitimate use of music in the case of *Le Coq d'Or*.

*Le Coq d'Or* was put on by Diaghileff in 1914 as an operatic ballet. The singers were stationed in the wings, the dancers held the stage and acted the plot. In this particular case it would be difficult to imagine a more successful presentation. *Le Coq d'Or* was revived by de Basil in 1937. Fokine, who had arranged the choreography of the original production, took charge of this, with the difference that the score was especially arranged by N. Tcherepnin, a pupil of Rimsky-Korsakov, the composer, as a ballet. The singing was entirely cut.

The work, with its magnificent costumes and scenery by Gontcharova, was unquestionably a theatrical success, but certain critics attacked it on musical grounds. They denied the right of anyone to modify a composer's music after his death. On moral grounds they were undoubtedly right. On practical grounds only partially so. They stated that music composed for the voice could not be adapted for the dance, that the adaptation injured the music itself and was in any case unsatisfactory.

Fokine's reply was interesting. While it did not directly

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answer the charges, since in a sense they are unanswerable, it posed fresh charges.

"The libretto of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Coq d'Or*," said Fokine, "is based on a wonderful play by our great poet Pushkin. In adapting it the composer took many liberties with the verse. We must not forget that *Le Coq d'Or* is Pushkin's as much as Rimsky-Korsakov's. In my dramatic form I am restoring much of the atmosphere and characterisation of the play." In other words, he is telling the musicians *Tu quoque*.

There were other arguments advanced, clever debating points, but they do not affect the main issue.

Undoubtedly a counsel of perfection would have been to commission fresh music round the same theme, but in practice the difficulties would have been too great. *Le Coq d'Or*, 1937 version, did offend musically, certain passages lost a great deal in value, and on that account alone it cannot rank with the choreographer's greatest. But it was a highly effective theatrical spectacle, and it did less artistic violence than a performance of the same work exactly as it was composed, but sung by fat singers with no conception of acting. In this last case, however, no musical critic would have objected, and in viewing ballet the musical critic is not always consistent.

The choreographer must have a musical conscience, the musician must understand that ballet is theatre, and often, for purely practical reasons, a compromise is necessary. This is no defence of musical vandalism, but a plea of mitigating circumstances.

### (D) DÉCOR

We can best realise the function of scenery and costume in the entity that is ballet if we imagine performances of any of the works with which we are familiar in practice clothes and in front of plain curtains or a cyclorama.

Let us take a number of examples, starting with the romantic *Les Sylphides*, the very title of which makes us think of a dress worn by Taglioni, the direct inspiration of the work. Something would certainly remain, since the movement is beautiful in itself, but that movement was conceived with a special dress in view. The whole atmosphere of the enchanted grove would be lost. The gliding of sylphs would become the daily classroom exercises of flesh-and-blood young girls.

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We can see from this simple example that while something of ballet still exists without costume (nothing remains without music or dancing), costume is not merely a pleasing embellishment added to the structure, but is a part of the structure. History has shown us the intimate connection between costume and dance. In this case it intensifies the atmosphere from a dramatic point of view. The same ballet danced in the revealing classical *tutu* would immediately distort the whole conception by drawing the spectator's attention to the physical side of the dance, muscle and virtuosity.

The fact that the same movement in different costumes can convey such opposite impressions is a very striking example of the role that costume plays, and will aid us later in refuting a current fallacy. Our next example, *Les Présages*, is equally striking, and it has on one occasion been performed in practice costume. Yet, in spite of the fact that the way in which it is dressed is banal in the extreme, on that occasion the work lost a great deal of its meaning. The young lovers still made their effect, but the more positive character roles degenerated into exercises; Fate was no longer menacing, Frivolity was agile but not truly gay, Action lost in strength. These costumes were not good, but they contributed something vital to the theatrical effect.

In neither of these examples have I mentioned the actual scenery. There is a difference of function between costume and scenery. Scenery is something physically apart from the dancers and is less indispensably connected with the whole. It can save a weak ballet, almost spoil a good one, and add the finishing touch to a great one. Its primary function is to form a background that will show up the line and the subtleties of the choreography. In the first scenic version of *La Symphonie Fantastique* the backcloth was dark and the dancers sombrely clad. A highly complex piece of choreography worked out in its smallest details was entirely lost. The second backcloth was light and revealed the richness of the detail. It failed, however, to help the atmosphere. Had it done so, it would have been a complete success.

Another example is that charming ballet, *Jeux d'Enfants*. Here the story is vague and has little significance on paper, but is strictly logical in action with a truth of its own. Its logic is irresistible because action, music, and scenery move in the same direction. The décor here shows the valuable contribution that

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surrealism can bring to the theatre. Remove the painter's contribution and the " truth " of this ballet would vanish.

The drop-curtain so frequently used must be properly understood in its relation to the work. It must not be merely an enlarged picture. It is a part of the theatrical illusion. If it is too violent or restless, it destroys the mood. It must create a sympathetic atmosphere and also induce concentration. It is parallel to the musical overture.

We have deduced the following: costume is very closely linked with the actual choreography itself, since it is physically a part of the dancer. Costume intensifies the atmosphere dramatically and so assists the narration. Décor must show up the detail and pattern of the choreography. Décor must parallel the music and movement.

This is a refutation of the easy idea that costumes and décor are merely an embellishment. Yet today, since the death of Diaghileff, nearly all ballets are mounted on that principle. Music and choreography are settled first of all, then the painter comes in and dresses the result. The painter has the right to be a partner from the beginning. Not only must the choreographer know the shape of the costumes, but also their colour. If grouping means anything at all, it is obvious that colour plays as great a role as line. Painter and choreographer are as closely related as choreographer and composer, and painter and composer are also related through the choreography as well as through the subject-matter. Only through such a basic conception will really great ballets be created. It is impossible today to touch *Petrouchka*, *Carnaval*, or any of the major Diaghileff successes. To re-dress them would be to destroy them. But most of the recent successes would actually gain by a change of décor, a confession of weakness.

A partial definition of ballet from another angle might be helpful. *Ballet is the result of a collaboration in which musician, painter, and choreographer interpret a common subject, each one in his own medium; the closer the collaboration, the better the result.*

Historically, the evolution of décor has followed very similar lines to that of music. At the start it is so much a part of the dance that it practically dictates the movement. The early choreographer, if he does not devise his own costumes, is capable of exercising a very close control. Then it degenerates into a

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purely mechanical embellishment from which Diaghileff rescues it. Today it is well-meaning, but usually misapplied through lack of time and thought.

The early choreographers, Beauchamps, Noverre, Vigano, Blasis, were men of exceptional knowledge in every branch of art. When the *maitre de ballet* began to specialise in movement to the neglect of the other arts, it became necessary to replace his function of selection. It is this role that Diaghileff fulfilled so outstandingly. If décor today can be called well-meaning in principle, it is because Diaghileff educated every choreographer with whom he came into contact. Ballet décor is still entrusted to the interesting artist and not the professional theatre designer of pre-Diaghileff days. What is lacking is the authority to guide the right artist once he has been discovered. Once more we are up against the old problem, the education of the dancer, and with every fresh confrontation it strikes us as being more serious, until we are forced to the conclusion that when all dancers can only dance, ballet will be in immediate danger of extinction.

## (E) LITERATURE

According to our original definition, ballet expresses *an atmosphere, a theme, or a story*. It is clear, therefore, that literature must play an important role, and the more precisely that the exact nature of that role is understood, the better the ballet will be. A false literary conception at the start must kill the best of work.

Before the music is composed or chosen the ballet exists as an idea. That idea is the common meeting-ground of the musician, the choreographer, and the painter. It is easy to generalise and to draw up some elaborate theory that will look well on paper, but it is better to deduce our theory from the actual practice. Daily I receive intricate scenarios for ballet; a few of them might possibly be suitable as subjects, yet without fail they are entirely worthless. No ballet scenario submitted from the outside has ever received consideration, and for a very excellent reason.

The modern ballet according to the Diaghileff system is not based on a concrete scenario. It is based on a vague idea that grows, develops, and takes form through contact with the painters, musicians, and choreographers who are familiar with the medium. Literature does not dictate the form of the ballet.

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The immediate pre-Diaghileff method was to devise a scenario, like the plot of a play, and fit it with action, music, and costume. In the end, all that remained of the scenario was the story in the programme and some mechanical mime inserted at intervals. Words have a definite meaning, music and movement have not. There must therefore be a compromise, the nature of which will be evident when we select a few examples. I have already touched on the subject in the section on acting.

*Petrouchka*, the most successful of all dance dramas, had its origin as follows. Before undertaking *Le Sacre du Printemps*, Stravinsky wished to compose a work for piano and orchestra. "In composing the music," he says, "I had in my mind a distinct picture of a puppet suddenly endowed with life, exasperating the patience of the orchestra with diabolical cascades of arpeggi. The orchestra in turn retaliates with menacing trumpet blasts. The outcome is a terrific noise which reaches its climax and ends in the sorrowful and querulous collapse of the poor puppet. . . . I struggled for hours to find a title which would express in a word the character of my music and consequently the personality of this creature. . . . One day I leapt for joy. I had indeed found my title—*Petrouchka*, the immortal and unhappy hero of every fair in all countries."

This is still far from being a ballet. Then Stravinsky played it over to Diaghileff. "I played him the piece which I had just composed and which later became the second scene of *Petrouchka*. He was so much pleased with it that he would not leave it alone, and began persuading me to develop the theme of the puppet's sufferings and make it into a whole ballet."

With Diaghileff he gradually elaborated a story. Then Diaghileff wrote to Benois: "You must make the ballet which Igor Stravinsky and I have in mind. Yesterday I heard the music of the Russian Dance and Petrouchka's shrieks which he has just composed. . . ."

Benois had always been interested in fairs, and so gave the ballet its setting, inventing the figure of the old charlatan from the inspiration of his favourite Hoffmann.

Accounts vary as to how the final story was arrived at. Actually, it was a close collaboration between the composer and the painter, each one of whom understood the medium of ballet, and of the choreographer Fokine, who brought final reality to their dreams.

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This is typical of ballet creation, the translation into something concrete of a visual impression and not of a written synopsis.

There is the case of *Le Sacre du Printemps*, also revealed to us by Stravinsky in his valuable memoirs. "One day, when I was finishing the last pages of *L'Oiseau de Feu* in St. Petersburg, I had a fleeting vision which came to me as a complete surprise, my mind at the moment being full of other things. *I saw in imagination* a solemn pagan rite: sage elders, seated in a circle, watched a young girl dance herself to death. They were sacrificing her to propitiate the god of Spring. . . . I must confess that *this vision* made a deep impression on me, and I at once described it to my friend Nicholas Roerich, he being a painter who had specialised in pagan subjects. He welcomed my inspiration with enthusiasm and became my collaborator in this creation. I told Diaghileff about it, and he was at once carried away by the idea.

• • •  
I have italicised certain words to stress the visual origin of the idea. Nijinsky was also groping for a theme that would free him from the eternal use of purely classical technique, and so *Le Sacre du Printemps* was created.

Still one further example, this time of a very definite narrative to music already composed and for another story.

The origin of *Scheherazade* is still under dispute, and for the very reason that it was a perfect collaboration. Prince Lieven, relating Alexandre Benois' point of view, writes: "Diaghileff hit upon the idea of producing a ballet to Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. . . . As a youth Benois had heard and enjoyed this music, and for some reason he had associated it in his imagination with the prologue to the *Arabian Nights*. . . . Rimsky-Korsakov's music was written to quite a different programme. . . .

"The conferences of the friends about ballet generally followed these lines: the music was played until it had induced in the listeners some *plastic image*. . . . He (Benois) would fall into a sort of trance, shout to the others to keep quiet, and begin abruptly, accompanied by the music, to relate the appropriate ballet."

It would appear from these accounts that the original idea of a ballet that grows into a narrative is arrived at by accident. That is not altogether correct. The persons to whom the ideas arrive and by whom they are developed are practical men of the

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theatre, soaked in the atmosphere of ballet and thoroughly conscious of the medium.

When ballets have been conceived by men of letters, those men have been poets, and poets in the *entourage* of the ballet. Théophile Gautier visualised the story of *Giselle* after reading Heine; Jean Louis Vaudoyer visualised *Le Spectre de la Rose* after reading Gautier. Jean Cocteau, who devised many ballets, is a painter as well as a poet-dramatist; Boris Kochno, a poet and an expert theatre man. The majority of the recent English ballets have been devised by the composer Constant Lambert, musical director of the Sadler's Wells Company. There is no exception to the rule that the scenario devised in a purely literary manner is worthless. The actual workers in ballet must be fired with enthusiasm by some plastic image that is discussed and re-discussed until it takes on a definite form. To start with a definite form is to court disaster. Sometimes the ballet remains vague: *Les Sylphides*, the atmosphere of a sylph-haunted wood; *Carnaval*, the coming to life of Schumann's musical images; *Cotillon*, a ball with certain vague and mysterious happenings; *Jeux d'Enfants*, the fantastic secret life of toys; *Rendezvous*, greetings, partings, and flirtations. In such cases music has suggested the atmosphere. In others it has been colour. But always it is the artist who has created the literary element of ballet.

### (F) ECONOMICS<sup>1</sup>

This is a strange, forbidding section to be found in a chapter on the aesthetic background of ballet, but the economic situation affects everything that we have been discussing so strongly that it belongs here: the ghost at an aesthetic banquet. However interesting it may be to dream about the ideal ballet under ideal conditions, it is a pure waste of time not to take into consideration things as they actually are; also, it is unfair to those who are having to contend with such conditions. The expenses of ballet production are so heavy that no one directly connected with its production receives an adequate reward, however great the success. Its origin at the court of a wealthy monarch is a thing to remember at all times.

To start once again with the dancer: an ordinary English girl, who has none of the benefits of a State institution. The budget

<sup>1</sup> The figures quoted here refer, of course, to peace-time conditions.

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varies considerably, but I have taken a fair average from number submitted to me: underestimating, if anything.

During the ordinary school-age period, from eight to fifteen she will take about two classes a week during eight months the year: average cost of the class, 4s. Total cost, £43 16 excluding shoes, practice dress, etc. It would be fair to rate her dancing education for those seven years at £50.

From fifteen to seventeen years of age, she will take a lesson a day for eight months of the year at £1 a week. In addition she will probably pay £12 a year on a series of private lessons. This makes the cost of the last two years £88, with no extras for dress. Total cost to turn out a dancer, £138 to £150.

By that time she is, according to modern usage, ready to join a company. Thousands of girls pass through dancing classes every year; of those, one hundred may have the ambition to join a ballet company. There are some three companies with perhaps six vacancies altogether, and it must be remembered that the Russian companies have the schools of the entire world to supply their wants. They have more offers than they can consider even of girls wishing to join under apprenticeship condition. It is clear that the candidate, to be successful, must have altogether exceptional gifts and also exceptional luck.

Once she is chosen for the *corps de ballet* she may be paid, on an average, £5 a week. She will be given a pair of shoes for every eight or twelve performances: it depends on the custom of the particular company. This is inadequate, and she will have to purchase about three extra pairs a month at an average price of 6s. a pair. In addition she must provide her own tights—silk—at £3 3s. a pair. With luck a pair may last a year, but she will need to keep two pairs going. Her expenses are not yet fully met. There is her make-up, which comes to about £2 to £5 a year. Not very much remains to reward an exceptionally talented girl for work that is nearly as hard as that of a hospital nurse. Also, most girls take classes at their own expense in addition to those given by the company. There is, of course the possibility of a rise in salary and position. With exceptionally good fortune it could reach £15 a week. In such case the dancer would be almost at the top of her profession, as well known to her followers, though they would be smaller in number, as the actress earning £40 a week, or the featured film player earning from £150. Not a very bright picture.

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The dancer must have a very genuine vocation, as well as some private means behind her. If she is dancing in London and living with her parents her situation is much better, but in a Russian company she will be travelling and keeping herself for about seven months of the year.

From these figures it would look very much as if the dancer were being exploited. Such is not the case.

Let us now look at the business budget. It is not possible to give exact figures, since there are great differences in company budgets. Here is a rough indication. The orchestra is protected by union regulations; if the dancer was also, there would be no ballet at all. An orchestra may cost anything from £500 to £700 a week. Extra rehearsals of a complicated work will run the bill way up. I can remember one bill of £1,400 for the week. There is the stage staff, union wages with extra for overtime; the front of the house staff, the electric light bill, the publicity, advertising, and printing. These may fall to the lot of the theatre engaging the company or upon theatre and ballet manager in a proportion arranged by contract. The theatre may guarantee the manager so much per week and a percentage of profits. The manager's own expenses are enormous. Firstly, his salary bill and general running costs, including copyright on certain works—anything up to £7 a performance—and renewals of costumes (perspiration not being conducive to a very long life). He will have to pay an agent a booking fee of ten per cent. on his guarantee and over. For some extraordinary reason there is often more than the one agent. Ballet attracts hangers-on who dip their fingers into the profits. Then there are the production costs. A theatre manager will expect three new ballets during a season. A new ballet will cost anything from £750 to £3,000. The idea of the music, and its execution, band parts, and rehearsals, must be paid for; the conception of the scenery and costumes and their execution must be paid for, as well as various extras in entertaining during the launching of a new work. The new ballet accounts for only one-third of the evening's entertainment. It will pay its way only if it is good enough to take its place in the regular repertoire, and so be played over a number of years. Even then it may not in itself be a box-office draw, but may please patrons once they are already in the house. To be a box-office draw it must have absolutely extraordinary merit. The majority of Diaghileff's early ballets have amply paid for

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themselves, though he did not see the profit, wiped out by too many extravagant ventures. A failure may run for half a dozen performances and then be fit for the scrapheap. Under these circumstances—and the picture is not unduly gloomy, but is drawn mainly from experiences with very successful companies—it is not surprising that the dancers are badly paid; indeed, it is surprising that they are paid at all.

We have not yet reckoned with the expenses of travel and the wear and tear of travel. The public for ballet is still comparatively small. The fact that there are many who come night after night deceives us as to the exact number. Apart from London, which gives by far the best returns and can support a company for about three months with a repertoire of twenty-five ballets, there are few cities that can support more than a week. This means that constant travel is an absolute necessity. Experience shows that if a company rests for more than a month in the year, its artists disperse. They badly need the holiday, but cannot afford it. The sphere of travel in Europe is greatly restricted by political and economic questions. For instance, Spain, that could always guarantee a month or more a year, is now ruled out. Germany is still possible and eager, but the money is locked up and can only be used on the spot for running expenses. The smaller Central European countries cannot afford a big organisation. Ballet never pays well in France. The ballet map of Europe consists of England, Monte Carlo with an odd week in Italy, Germany, and Scandinavia. The world map includes America, Australia, and South Africa, with South America a possible market, but difficult at the moment. Journeys must obviously be long; two Atlantic crossings a year, all of which must be financed by someone.<sup>1</sup>

Agents and impresarios gain when things are going well; the ballet itself rarely has money to spare; everything must be immediately reinvested.

This picture explains many artistic shortcomings in an art that was never intended to be commercialised. It explains the eagerness to utilise existing music, out of copyright, and also the

<sup>1</sup> The case of Sadler's Wells is entirely different and resembles in many respects a State institution. It is subsidised to the extent of a remission of entertainment tax. On the other hand, it plays at popular prices and only twice a week, so that its position is not altogether easy.

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inability to find time in which to develop the education of the dancers. Every counsel of perfection must be weighed against the actual state of things. At the same time sound artistic planning, invoking the principles I have discussed, would in the end prove both good art and sound business, if one can use such a term about anything as precarious as ballet. The successful struggle of ballet from the luxury of a court to the rough and tumble of constant travel, while it has affected its aesthetic, shows the essentially healthy condition of the art.

### (G) THE MAKING OF A DANCER—IN PRACTICE

Since we have left the rarefied atmosphere of aesthetics for the consideration of economics, it might be well to continue this chapter on a practical note.

I receive hundreds of letters every year from anxious mothers asking how their daughters are to be made into *ballerinas*. I can never reply by anything very positive and likely to please an anxious mother, not through unwillingness, but because I cannot speak without a knowledge of the prospective *ballerina*—and of her mother. In a country where there is a State institution there is no problem at all. Here, the parent must use considerable judgment, and also, in the creation of an artist, the home atmosphere counts for a great deal. Here is a summary of the only advice I have been able to give.

1. Is your daughter really well built: not too tall (five feet six inches is the beginning of the danger-point)? Is she strong and healthy?

If she is not well built, by all means let her study dancing. Careful teaching will improve her physique; but let her take up dancing with no illusions of a career, though there have been cases where knock-knees or bow-legs have been remedied in an extraordinary manner by a teacher who understands anatomy.

If she is delicate, consult your doctor, but experience shows that dancing is healthy. A career in ballet under modern conditions requires exceptional health.

On no account let her go in for slimming. If the hard work does not reduce her, then the cause of the fatness is probably glandular. Hard muscular work needs plenty of sugar as fuel. It is the mother's task to adapt routine and diet to the conditions

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of work. In England, where a ballet career is comparatively new and is a private matter, scarcely anything is understood about a dancer's health, which ruins more careers than any other single factor.

2. Do not neglect the rest of her education, particularly music. Piano is a definite asset to a dancer, and should be a part of her education.

3. Do not stress examinations or become a cup-hunter, for reasons obvious in the text of this chapter. Examinations are only of value when properly understood, and are better taken late than early.

4. Once you have found a teacher whose record, academic and theatrical—and I believe in a teacher with a practical experience of the stage—impresses you, trust her and do not interfere or move the child from school to school. There are mothers who send their unfortunate daughters to three or more schools: unfair to everyone concerned.

5. Do not expect rapid results or be disappointed if she does not dance from the very start. The important thing is the correct placing of the body, upon which everything depends. This takes time, and nearly all present-day dancers are made to dance too soon; either because it flatters their parents' vanity, or because it is a pressing financial necessity. It is nearly always impossible to eradicate the mistakes of a false start.

6. Round ten is the correct age to start; before eight it is positively harmful. Over twelve the pupil is a little handicapped, unless she is naturally supple and athletic. Over sixteen it is too late to hope for a successful career.

7. Always bear in mind that dancing is not merely something physical and apart from the pupil's reactions to everyday life. Character is revealed in movement to an extraordinary degree, as any psychiatrist will reveal. Meanness, arrogance, untidiness, shyness, fear, self-indulgence, slyness, lack of discipline are all traits that are speedily revealed in the dance. Therefore the parent has as much control of the pupil as the teacher and can touch certain springs hidden to the teacher. Often the parent undoes the excellent work of the dancing school, through imagining that the budding genius requires very special treatment, instead of a thoroughly normal disciplined life on common-sense lines. I know of numberless examples, which every teacher can confirm, of good material ruined by misplaced affection.

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The mother should not sit and watch every movement of the class, as so many do. It would be equally ridiculous to watch the son's geography or Latin lessons. The same point of view applies to each case.

The ballet mother has been notorious for the past hundred years. Albert Smith, author of an amusing pamphlet published in 1857, *The Natural History of the Ballet Girl*, writes: "The Ballet Girl has more frequently a mother than a father; a singular provision of Nature appears to have denied the latter parent to them. . . . But they have all got mothers. . . ."

8. I have outlined the economic aspect of making a dancer. In cases of exceptional talent, the really good teacher will make considerable reductions. A successful pupil is her finest advertisement. Also there are various scholarships available.

9. To join a company requires perseverance, patience, exceptional ability, and good fortune. If you aim at a career in ballet for your daughter, you must be an idealist, for a ballet career in the ordinary course of events is not a practical aim. The openings are too few and the rewards too small.

## (H) OUTLETS: BALLET CLUBS, EXAMINATIONS, AND COMPETITIONS

One of the most recent and most important developments in this country has been the spontaneous formation of ballet clubs by *balletomanes*, teachers, and their pupils. These clubs put on shows periodically (shows that are more than the ordinary pupil displays because they are the result of collaboration), arrange lectures, discussions, and debates. The shows may often be indifferent, judged from professional standards; no matter. The value lies in the will to create and in the opportunity that hundreds of girls are given to have some contact with the stage.

Today the average girl works chiefly for exams, those of the Royal Academy of Dancing and other bodies. These exams are carefully arranged, but in practice they can be as harmful as they can be beneficial. They do not distinguish between pupils who are learning to be teachers and pupils who have stage ambition. Teachers must have certain qualifications, and the Royal Academy and kindred bodies have done admirable work

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in granting their certificates only to those who have satisfied the examiners. Such certificates cannot assure good teaching, but they can guard, as far as is humanly possible, against bad teaching, and they can make it almost impossible for the charlatan to earn a living. However, all pupils do not aim at becoming teachers, and examinations are apt to give an entirely wrong angle to the would-be *ballerina*, stressing technique at the expense of stage-craft. The whole system needs a drastic revision. I have seen many pupils who have passed advanced examinations and who are quite incapable of dancing, though they can perform steps. This is the rule rather than the exception. The ballet club movement, once it has spread and been developed along the proper lines, can give the pupil who has stage ambitions a really valuable experience and compensate for the eternal examination grind.

This is no attack on the examination principle in general—all State academies recognise its value—but a plea for its revision in a way that will distinguish between the stage artist and the teacher-to-be. A State academy aims at turning out dancers and can arrange its education and examinations accordingly. The fault of the present system is that it is working completely in the dark and solely from the point of view that the main aim of the pupil is to teach. If this is so, then the future of dancing is in a bad way, for the best teachers must have had a preliminary stage experience. The ballet club movement once harnessed can provide this, and in time should prove a dominant factor in English dancing life.

Another outlet for the pupil, the only creative one before the formation of ballet clubs, has been the competition. This can be admirable, if properly applied, but all too often it degenerates into pot-hunting. The work done at the local ballet club can teach certain values that will make competition work of far greater artistic value, and the ballet club organiser can watch the competitions closely for choreographic as well as dancing talent. It should be the bridge between examinations, competitions, and the actual ballet stage. In this way it will prove the best friend of both teachers and pupils.

Another important aspect of the ballet club movement is as a propagandist force. It can create a public, make its local press look upon ballet as news, and in this way make it possible for companies to increase their touring field, which

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will in its turn fill the schools and increase the ballet club membership.

The formation of ballet clubs all over the country, and their affiliation into a group that can ensure a certain artistic standard, are the next steps that ballet will take in this country. Its accomplishment will more than compensate for the lack of a State-supported organisation.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### MAKERS OF MODERN BALLET

#### (I) SERGE DIAGHILEFF

*The reign of an absolute monarch*

(i)

THE history of ballet is continuous: it travels from country to country, Italy to France, France and Italy to Russia, Russia to England; but it remains in the hands of those who have inherited the tradition. There is evolution but never revolution; progress is gradual and not forced. It is difficult to judge where exactly the history of modern ballet begins. I left my historical survey with the advent of three foreigners—Petipa, Johannsen, and then Cecchetti—to Russia. The effect of that arrival truly starts the story of modern ballet as we know it in practice today.

Petipa, a Frenchman from Marseilles, had a unique opportunity in which to found a school, having charge of the same company for some fifty years and mounting on them ballets in all as well as supervising all the work that was done. Neither Noverre nor Blasis, superior in every way as thinkers, had such a chance to exercise and develop his craft.

As a teacher Johannsen enjoyed similar opportunities, bringing with him the pure French school which the French themselves were beginning to forget. Soon there was a whole generation of Russian-born dancers, where formerly they had been exceptions.

Work under one *maitre de ballet*, however gifted, over a long number of years becomes monotonous, and after a quarter of a century Petipa was beginning to work by formula. The dances themselves were also getting into a groove when the Italian, Cecchetti, appeared in a private theatre with an Italian company. Grace and elegance were a characteristic of the French, strength and virtuosity of the Italians, and it was their virtuosity that appealed to the public. Greatly daring, the then director of the Imperial Theatres, A. Vsevolojsky, engaged Cecchetti as a *maitre de ballet*. Cecchetti was a teacher of genius. The new Italian method plus the rivalry caused by the two schools brought something new and vital, giving birth to a Russian method, *three-quarters French school and a quarter Italian school seen through the Russian temperament and shown through the Russian*

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*physique*. That is the exact meaning of that much-abused term *Russian Ballet*. English Ballet about to be born as a method will consist of the Russian school seen through the English temperament and shown through the English physique. It is already beginning to take shape; too embryonic as yet to characterise and label in the inexactly exact manner so beloved of critics.

In addition to engaging Cecchetti, who supplied the ingredient missing in Russian Ballet, Vsevolojsky commissioned ballets from Tchaikovsky, interesting after a very long interval the original musician in the medium of ballet.

But in every art a period of great perfection gives way to a sterile academism. A Raphael and a Michelangelo arise, leaving behind both beauty and an impossible path to follow. Their genuine personal discoveries become laws, the form of their work is followed but not its spirit. And they must wait fresh discovery at a later period when criticism allows them to be valued afresh. The formula of their work is repeated when its meaning is no more. Sometimes a veteran seeks to repeat his own early successes with the same result. Petipa was a veteran. By 1900 he had served the theatre fifty years, accomplishing a gigantic task. His work, thanks to the wise guidance of Vsevolojsky, had undergone one renaissance, but he had reached the end. Though ballet had never reached the low ebb of France, had never degenerated to the music-hall, as in England, there was nothing in it of interest for the thinking man. The conservative *balletomane* sat in his front row, peered and applauded, criticised, compared, and applauded. He did not wish for a change; he, too, had become a somewhat quaint survival. Ballet and *balletomanes* were museum exhibits.

There were great dancers who often shone in works unworthy of them—Kchesinska, sparkling virtuoso outstanding in *Esmeralda*; the perfectly classical Trefilova; Preobrajenska, witty, and the idol of the gallery; Egorova and others. While Pavlova travelled, they earned the plaudits of the *balletomanes* at home.

The renaissance of dancing has been theirs. As *émigrées* forced to spend their retirement teaching in Paris, they have formed the whole present generation of Russian dancers.

Isadora Duncan came to Russia and caused a sensation. She wore the flowing draperies that Sallé had vainly attempted to

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introduce two centuries before. She discarded the ballet as sacred symbol of the art of dancing. More daringly she da to music that had been heard only in the concert-hall and the majority of the *balletomanes* were quite incapable of understanding. She tried to interpret the meaning of that mus her dances. Technically she was a revolutionary, artistically we know, she was returning to the first principles of ballet.

She expressed herself as horrified by the artificialities of b she praised and patronised individual dancers. Her ac would have made little permanent impression had o connected with the academic body itself not felt exactl same.

Michael Fokine, a graduate of both the Imperial and dra schools, a musician and a painter, was undergoing a pr similar to that of Duncan. He was not a revolutionary i sense, for he valued the tradition and the training out of v he was born and wished to preserve what was best. His was to resume where Noverre and Blasis had left off. D was horrified by what she saw, and illogically blamed the art for the manner in which it was being used. Fokine app of the basis of the art, but wished to find a different applic in which nature could become once again the guiding inspir. She objected to the use of the points in dancing, be to the of the points. She and her followers exaggerated their in ance just as the ballet was doing.

His first step was to abolish the enormously long entire ev ballet. To him, ballet must express itself with economy pretend to tell a story and then proceed to ignore it. T atmosphere, correct style were the things that truly mat His first ballets, *Nuits d'Egypte* and *Eunice*, while they earn admiration of the wise old man, Petipa, caused such an u that they nearly drove him from the theatre. Here w tradition that they had established with such care and ex being destroyed by a young upstart. But it was he who t stood the true tradition, not they. The fellow was at making *ballerinas* dance on their bare feet and upsetteir sacred order of things so completely that one could no tell at what period in the ballet the "high spot" of the ei occurred. These were indeed infamies, said the ballet B

Fokine might have abandoned the dance altogether, if in other media had not been following a parallel path at

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not see in ballet the perfect medium for the music and art in which they were interested.

### (II)

The leader of this group of earnest young thinkers was Alexandre Benois, a man of encyclopædic knowledge in every branch of art and literature, the descendant of a long line of artists, painters, and architects. His maternal grandfather was a composer, his uncle a distinguished theatrical architect.

As a student at school he had already gathered round him a group of friends, and later, at the university, they formed themselves into a club in which each one lectured on his own particular subject.

It is a characteristic of Russians to discuss endlessly until they have talked the original subject completely away, preferring dreams to reality, and Benois' group might easily have done the same, though Benois himself was a creative artist, had it not been for the advent of Serge Diaghileff, a country cousin of one of them.

Serge Pavlovitch Diaghileff was born at Perm in 1872. He belonged to the country nobility, an important factor in discussing his character. His environment was one of ease and culture, in which music and theatricals played a large part. It was his ambition to become a composer, but he came to St. Petersburg to study law at the university.

From the first he was different from the little group surrounding Benois. They considered him to be definitely provincial, less cultured than they, and, in spite of that, a little too bumptious and aggressive. They were definitely smug. He did not at first belong to the inner circle, he was on the fringe of the group purely through the accident of cousinship.

His university career was a secondary consideration. He went to the theatre, the opera, and to concerts, and developed his music, though early on he met with a check when Rimsky-Korsakov told him that he did not have an original talent. He is said to have retorted with supreme self-confidence. "I will be remembered when you are forgotten." He did much to make Rimsky-Korsakov remembered. He travelled, visited studios and museums, and in conversation with the friends sharpened his critical faculties. He was an enthusiast able to

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communicate his enthusiasm. Soon he became the leader of the group, the man who could put their theories into practical reality.

It was natural that with so much to express the friends should turn to journalism, and under the editorship of Diaghileff and Benois they started *The World of Art* (*Mir Iskoustva*). The difficulties of the undertaking were enormous. Russia was behind-hand in artistic book production, and it was necessary to find the plant from abroad and to create the journal physically as well as artistically. This and the organisation of a series of art exhibitions proved Diaghileff's abilities as an active organiser and taught him the first essentials of an *impresario*, though the term describes only a small part of his true function.

The platform of *The World of Art* was individualism. "One of the greatest merits of our times," wrote Diaghileff, "is to recognise individuality under every guise and at every epoch. He defined art as a "free and disinterested act taking place in the soul of the artist." "The sole function of art is pleasure; its only instrument beauty.... It is blasphemous to force ideas."

He maintained that art should exist for art's sake and not to teach a practical lesson. It could have no concern with earthly difficulties. He attacked both didactic art and stereotyped academicism, making himself a host of enemies.

### (iii)

It is only natural that with such a reformer's platform, ballet should appear as an ideal medium and one in which the quick results could be obtained. They had within their own group the necessary painters and musicians, and the young choreographer Fokine was burning for an opportunity to express himself.

During his first years in St. Petersburg Diaghileff was not interested in ballet, seeing only the ridiculous artificialities that had it in a stranglehold. Benois and his friend Nouvel, through seeing an exceptional dancer, Virginia Zucchi, were the ones who confirmed *balletomanes*, and it was they who turned Diaghileff thoughts in that direction.

The friends seemed to have gained their opportunity almost without a struggle when Diaghileff was offered an administrative post in the Imperial Theatres by a director eager for reform.

## MAKERS OF MODERN BALLET

Prince Serge Wolkonsky. Both through the journal and his conduct of the theatre Diaghileff had made many enemies. He was completely uncompromising. The production of Delibes' *Sylvia* was to be entrusted to him when those enemies revolted and, addressing a deputation to Wolkonsky, refused to have anything to do with the production. Wolkonsky, faced with a strike, countermanaged the production. Diaghileff insisted and was dismissed. A year later, Wolkonsky himself resigned after an administrative dispute, and the key post of director of the Imperial Theatres fell into the hands of a reactionary, Teliakovsky, an avowed enemy of Diaghileff and the group. All hope of successful experiments in ballet in Russia were dead.

Diaghileff continued to organise exhibitions with great success, brought Russian painting, music, and opera to Paris, but never ceased to dream of ballet.

Finally, in 1909, after conquering innumerable difficulties, many of them provoked by his own uncompromising attitude, he brought a Russian company to Paris, where its success revolutionised the history of ballet in Western Europe and later in America, leaving only his own country out of it, until today in Russia, country of the successful (?) revolution, the tradition of Petipa continues almost unchanged, though a commissar may sit in the box of an Emperor.

### (iv)

To understand the character of the new Russian Ballet it is necessary to understand the character and artistic evolution of its founder, for the ballets he presented were the expression of his artistic tastes of the moment. Save with Gautier, and Gautier's influence was far less, there is no one who can be compared with Diaghileff, non-dancer, non-composer, non-artist, who influenced the ballet, the music, and the art of his whole period.

The first conception we must have is that of the nobleman. The Russian noblemen had their own troupes, who performed for their pleasure and for that of their friends. Diaghileff was the direct descendant of such serf-owning nobles, and it coloured his attitude. He was first of all a man who indulged his own personal tastes and graciously allowed his friends to share his pleasure, and only afterwards a business man interested in such

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prosaic affairs as the box-office. Today the box-office must rule and we can no longer look at the ballet in the same way. Diaghileff represents the bridge between monarch and business man. Only after him does ballet become truly democratic.

Though Diaghileff was an autocrat he never attempted to dispense with advisers, and he had the flair for discovering new collaborators throughout his career. We have examined the ingredients that compose ballet, and since nowhere does the role of a Diaghileff appear, one must ask oneself exactly in what it consisted.

He created the role, it was a part of his mental make-up. He was a Mæcenas who did not spend his own money, an impresario who ignored the public taste, a business man who lost money; all these are negative things. As he never wrote or talked about himself we must deduce the positive ones. I have asked the majority of his collaborators to enlighten me, and their usual reply is a vague one that assigns to him some organising role or other and leaves the creative side to them. This is not so much a question of jealousy as of ignorance. They were the medium in which Diaghileff worked. Someone in his *entourage* would suggest an idea at supper, the idea would appeal to him. He would think of a composer and painter and introduce the idea to them. They would discuss it, with Diaghileff there to prompt and encourage them, then in a few months' time, in some cases a few years, a ballet would be ready. By that time no one could say whose was the original idea, and there was no trace of Diaghileff's work; but it was he who prevented the idea from being swept away with the remains of the meal and who found the very people who could develop it.

Once it had become a production, his function became that of censor. Before he had acted through flair, now it was through knowledge. He criticised music, both the composition and the execution, and musicians listened to him with respect and the minimum of anger. He modified a costume, suggested a change in the colour scheme, and so on. The dancing alone he did not touch, but he influenced the choreographer during the months in which the work was in question. Added to his flair was a passion for education. He discovered a "genius," word that he was fond of using, then took him to museums and concerts, brought him into contact with artists, moulding his opinions and trying to mould his character. So that, even though his name

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appears on no programme opposite a specified function, every production bore the imprint of his personality. The one role which he readily admitted was that of lighting expert. He had an extraordinary knowledge of theatre lighting and endless patience, spending as much as twelve hours on a set, until he had reached perfection. Today, it is all done within an hour, and unfortunately all too often conveys that impression. The essence of a Diaghileff production was its unity and the close attention to minute detail, at times extravagant and unnecessary.

His taste varied, as we shall see when we discuss the work, over the years, and there seems a contradiction at times between the cosmopolitan who was a patriot, the lover of Tchaikovsky, who belonged to the *avant-garde*, the romantic, who showed us *Le Pas d'Acier*; a contradiction that has raised doubts as to his sincerity. There is not the space here to trace bit by bit the happenings of his private life and their influence on his work; also it is not within the scope of this book. The one important thing to note is that it can be done and that it shows beyond doubt that the Diaghileff Ballet was Diaghileff.

Diaghileff was all his life terrified of death, admiring intensely everything that was young and vital. It is that quest for youth, growing feverish as he advanced in years, that accounts for the frantic modernism of the last phase, and all the time there was a deep natural love of the classicism and romanticism that reminded him of his own youth and the resultant conflict between the two. That is the only way in which we can truly understand Diaghileff.

Much has been written about his brutality and the manner in which he treated Nijinsky. This does not concern us here, though it must have altered the course of ballet history. An art such as ballet, where the tradition belongs to but a few people at one time and in one place—and during the twenty-five years the living art of ballet was travelling with Diaghileff, a part of his baggage—is constantly being influenced by private relationships. Diaghileff was domineering: no mild-mannered man could have kept the company alive throughout the Great War; but some of the portraits that have been painted of him as a scheming, mediæval villain are ridiculous and not borne out by facts, which show that he was loyal to his collaborators, with certain exceptions, throughout his long reign.

He was no Svengali, and those collaborators were neither

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mediums nor puppets, but thinking, intelligent beings, the finest artistic minds of the age, whom he stimulated and inspired: a different matter altogether. A type of legend has grown up, books, films, and plays have seized upon it, and history has been grossly distorted as a result. It is easier to believe in a legend than to investigate hard facts. My concern here is not to do justice to Diaghileff, but to trace the development of ballet with accuracy.

(v)

From ignoring Diaghileff's role altogether to exaggerating it and ignoring that of his many collaborators is an easy step. Diaghileff started his career under the strong influence of Benois and with a choreographer, Fokine, who was already formed. Before the start of the company Fokine had produced *Nuits d'Egypte*, afterwards *Cleopatra*, *Chopiniana*, afterwards *Les Sylphides*, *Carnaval*, and, under the influence of Benois, *Le Pavillon d'Armide*. Diaghileff improved the detail of these works, had the Chopin and the Schumann re-orchestrated; but in this first phase his function was purely that of censor, propagandist, and impresario.

### (a) Music

The characteristic of this first period of a year, 1909, is the use of adapted music. The Diaghileff Ballet begins to be a fully creative artistic force with the collaboration of Stravinsky the following year in *The Firebird*.

"Throughout the winter," writes Stravinsky, "I worked strenuously at my ballet, and that brought me into constant touch with Diaghileff and his collaborators. Fokine created the choreography of *The Firebird*, section by section, as the music was handed to him. I attended every rehearsal with the company, and after rehearsals Diaghileff, Nijinsky, and myself generally ended the day with a fine dinner, washed down with good claret."

The significant phrases here are the *constant touch* and the *fine dinner*. It was on such informal occasions that Diaghileff worked, and the close association resulted in a whole series of ballets: *Petrouchka*, 1911; *Sacre du Printemps*, 1912; the ballets

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that made the name of Stravinsky and that interested the serious musicians in ballet, a hitherto despised art.

Stravinsky collaborated with Diaghileff till the end, not mere as a composer, but as minister of music to the cabinet. As soon as sufficient composers had become interested, no more ready-made music was used, though music was frequently adapted with marked success in such ballets as *Pulcinella*, *La Boutique Fantasque*, and *Les Dames de Bonne Humeur*.

Today, there is no minister for music in the Russian Ballet cabinet, and the young composer is beginning to abandon ballet. One of the reasons for the artistic success of Sadler's Wells is that Constant Lambert, trained in the Diaghileff *milieu*, has assumed that function.

### (b) Décor

The décor of the Diaghileff Ballet was fully creative from the very start, under the guidance of Alexandre Benois. *The World of Art* had aimed at reforms in painting, and one of the reasons for the founding of the ballet was to give the new painting a platform. The artists concerned in the first decorative period from 1909 until the first year of the War were Russians: Benois, Bakst, Roerich, Korovin, Gontcharova, with the modernist Larionov as a bridge between the modern French painters and the Russians.

While Benois outlined the policy it was Bakst, with his glowing, exotic colours, who attracted the attention and who revolutionised the decorative art of the world. The change in decorative policy was brought about by two reasons—the accident of war that separated Benois and Diaghileff (Bakst remained a collaborator till the end of his life), and the quest of Diaghileff after novelty. He was always frightened of degenerating into a formula, eager to go in advance of the public taste. Even without the War such a change would have come about, and he was already interested in the work of Larionov, a Moscow painter who had come under the influence of Paris. The aesthetics of ballet swung from the new romanticism to the grotesque, from curves to angles. It was a natural reaction from the arabesques to the cold logic of a Picasso, and Picasso and his followers took the place of Benois. The casual artist replaced the professional theatre artist, and in his turn became a professional, the sam-

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evolution as in Russia itself. The essential thing is the close collaboration throughout. Monte Carlo ballet remained for some months in every year, was at which the artists in every medium met and exchanged. Today, without that close contact with the theatre artist is apt to remain a complete amateur. Through the Diaghileff Ballet, when music and choreography the décor remained on an exceptionally high level.

### (c) Dancing

During its first years, until 1910, the Diaghileff Ballet was a travelling branch of the Imperial Theatre, the dancers Diaghileff during their long vacation. There was a difficulty of finding appropriate dates. When, after scandal,<sup>1</sup> Nijinsky was dismissed from the Imperial Ballet, Diaghileff formed his own company and the artists had a choice, but until the War the supply of his dancers was unfailing. After Pavlova's defection he found in Karsavina an ideal *ballerina*: a woman of intelligence, in thorough sympathy with the new movement, with a range of expression that made her available for all. For a long time she continued a dual existence as a dancer in St. Petersburg, interpreting the classics, as the standard-bearer of the new ballet. Karsavina remains the ideal of a *ballerina*, with every attribute that I have outlined, always in her mind that I have set my standards.

Closely associated with her is Vaslav Nijinsky, who became a legend, and it is difficult to write about him. He was the first Russian male dancer to be seen in Western memory plays tricks, and how much greater he was than other dancer since it is impossible to say. He was a great instinctive artist, to whom technique was a secondary consideration.

Among the other artists of this great dancing period were Lydia Lopokova, later *ballerina* of the company, Lulia Nicheva, a strong dramatic actress fortunately still on the stage, and Adolf Bolm. But all were experienced in stage dancing, finished dancers of a type that belongs to the past. Among them was one exceptional English girl, Lydia Sokolova, who

<sup>1</sup> See *Diaghileff*, by Arnold L. Haskell.

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knowledge and dramatic ability made her definitely one of them.

Diaghileff never at any time wished to alter either the type or the training of his dancers. His ideal was the pure classical *ballerina*. When war and revolution separated him from the great manufactory of *ballerinas*, he tried to reproduce the system abroad, engaging maestro Cecchetti for the classics and the intensive training of especially talented dancers.

Vera Nemtchinova became his first *ballerina* not trained in the Imperial schools who had risen out of his own ranks. The fine Polish dancers, Idzikovski and Woizikovski, played an important role, stressing the invaluable work of Cecchetti in Warsaw. Many English dancers joined the company, among them Vera Savina, light, and of exceptional elevation, who made a great reputation, Ninette de Valois, Alicia Markova, and an Englishman, Anton Dolin, who became *premier danseur classique*.

Diaghileff engaged the strictly classical Olga Spessivtseva when he was able, Ludmila Schollar and Anatol Wilzak, magnificent *danseur noble*, and induced Vera Trefilova, the purest of all classicists, to return to the stage, but almost imperceptibly a change was coming about. During his last three years the bulk of the work was entrusted to three highly talented but immature and not yet fully trained dancers: Alice Nikitina, Alexandra Danilova, and Serge Lifar, all of whom made names at a much later period. The programme could not be revealingly classical, and the modernist experiments did not assist in the training of the young dancers. It was a vicious circle. The period of the wonder children trained by the St. Petersburg *ballerina*, *émigrées* in Paris, was still five years distant.

### (d) *Choreography*

Until the War, with but a brief interregnum, Fokine was in charge of the choreography. It is interesting to note that out of thirteen works of his produced during that period eleven still survive, and *Les Sylphides*, *Carnaval*, *Prince Igor*, and *Petrouchka* are the most constantly given of all ballets. *Fokine is, beyond all question, the father of contemporary ballet, and his works are school pieces in the sense that they must be studied by everyone connected with ballet.*

The interregnum of 1912-1913 was brought about through personal reasons, but the ballets of 1914, *Papillons* and *Joseph's*

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*Legend*, seem to show that Fokine was a little weary and inclined to repeat a success without success.

Nijinsky's ballets, with one exception, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, do not survive today. He was undoubtedly a greater dancer than choreographer; a man with something very definite to express, but without the means, the necessary musical knowledge, of expressing it. The constant contact with pure classicism seems to have inspired in him a revolt in which he wished to express strong primitive things in a jerky, angular fashion as far removed from the Fokine ballets as possible. The first attempt, *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, caused a first-rate scandal, being attacked by the *Figaro* on moral grounds and defended by Rodin on æsthetic ones. This was followed by *Jeux*, a tennis ballet, which was a complete failure, and *Le Sacre du Printemps*, which provoked a still greater scandal. The Nijinsky legend must not blind us to facts. Stravinsky says of *Le Sacre du Printemps*: "Nijinsky began by demanding such a fantastic number of rehearsals that it was physically impossible to give them to him. It will not be difficult to understand why he wanted so many, when I say that in trying to explain to him the construction of my work in general outline and in detail, I discovered that I should achieve nothing until I had taught him the very rudiments of music. . . . When, in listening to music, he contemplated movements, it was always necessary to remind him that he must make them accord with the *tempo*, its divisions and values."

The Nijinsky interregnum, however, was of value, even if the work was not. It shook the dancers from their composure and prevented the Russians from adopting a formula of success, and in similar fashion it shook the public and made them watch attentively. It is all too easy to take in alone the more obvious beauty of ballet, to watch it in a sort of trance and to ignore its character. The sudden shock of these scandals prevented that. The true enrichment of ballet and the movement away from neo-romanticism was brought about by Leonide Massine. Nijinsky paved the way.

Leonide Massine started his career as a soloist in 1914, and as choreographer in 1915. *He still dominates the stage in both capacities, one of the outstanding figures in the whole history of ballet.*

With Massine the Diaghileff Ballet begins a new phase; it is

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truly the Diaghileff Ballet, while during the first few years the Diaghileff-Fokine Ballet would be a more accurate description.

When Nijinsky left the company Diaghileff was faced with finding a successor to dance the role of the young Joseph in *Joseph's Legend*, an ambitious ballet commissioned from Richard Strauss. The work of a very young man in the Moscow school attracted his attention and he engaged him. From the first Massine showed unusual ability, taking advantage of the immense educational facilities given him. He devoured books, studied in museums, and listened to the conversation of artists. It was immediately obvious that this was to be no ordinary dancer. In accordance with the new tendencies of the ballet, Diaghileff entrusted a large part of his protégé's early artistic education to Larionov.

The first ballet, *The Midnight Sun*, a pagan Russian festival in a grotesque setting by Larionov, was produced in 1915 at the Opéra, Paris, for a War charity gala. It is still in the repertoire today, a slight work, but one that already reveals an extraordinary gift for the use of folk material. This was followed by some Spanish fragments, the education for *Three-cornered Hat*, and by a portion of what became *Contes Russes*. The influence of Larionov was still great. With his first full-length ballet, a masterpiece, *Les Dames de Bonne Humeur*, Massine became completely himself, producing ballet after ballet until he left in 1921. There could be no question of replacing him, no risk of his discovering a formula. He was infinitely varied, deeply interested in experiment. Following on Fokine's reforms and Nijinsky's unfulfilled ambitions, he greatly enriched the pattern of the dance, bringing to it the dances of Spain, the inspiration of Hogarth and Callot, the cubism of Picasso, and the spirit of the machine age. His invention is far from exhausted, he is the major figure in the contemporary ballet. At his worst he exaggerated movement in compositions that reminded one of the later Raphael, a phase that soon disappeared when he was no longer caught up in the modern movement and began to look back to classicism as a firm foundation. Massine left Diaghileff in 1921 for purely personal reasons, only to return later as a guest.

The fact of Massine leaving, as well as a sentimental memory of his youth, turned Diaghileff back to classicism. In an age of democracy he decided to present a lavish revival of the famous

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Maryinsky ballet: Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Princess*. As usual, he prepared the ground with great care. The music was partly re-orchestrated by Stravinsky, who reassured the moderns that this was no retrograde step, that Tchaikovsky was the most characteristic of all Russian composers, and that they must not be deceived by the traditional Muscovite flavour absent in his music. The ballet was dressed and decorated by Leon Bakst and additional numbers from *Casse-Noisette* were incorporated into it. Diaghileff engaged the last of the classical *ballerinas*, Vera Trefilova and Olga Spessivtseva, for the role of Aurora, and greatly enriched his company. As a sentimental gesture characteristic of the man he engaged Carlotta Brianza, who had created the role in the original production, to mime the wicked fairy Carabosse.

The result was the first truly classical Russian ballet on a grand scale that London had ever seen, and consequently the first opportunity to gain a real basic knowledge of ballet. For a quantity of reasons a work that would have enjoyed success today was a comparative failure.

Diaghileff was expected to provide surprises, but of a Left tendency, and in spite of his skilled propaganda he could not counterbalance a propaganda of the past. The man who had presented a cubist manifesto, *Parade*, was not expected to return to the aesthetics of his ancestors. His public was comparatively small, and not one that understood the finer points of ballet. The fashion was against him, and for once in his life he could not sway it. The work was very extravagantly produced, requiring a year's run to show any profit. A mechanical device went wrong on the first night and ruined an effective scene.

Diaghileff's lesson had its full effect only in retrospect. It undoubtedly set a standard of dancing.

The immediate reaction of this failure, which endangered the very existence of the company, was to make him turn to modernism once again. His new choreographer was Bronislava Nijinska, sister of Nijinsky, and a very remarkable dancer. Nijinska turned to choreography through necessity. She was teaching in Kiev with the ambition of forming dancers to interpret her brother's ballets. She saw that the orthodox curriculum was inadequate, and her first attempts at choreography consisted in exercises for her pupils. Through that departure she became the most personal of all choreographers, teaching the

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dancers first of all to think in terms of her work. For Diaghileff she produced one masterpiece, *Les Noces*, to Stravinsky's music, misunderstood in this country but warmly defended by H. G. Wells. *Les Noces* was a ballet of intricate mass movement that revealed the esoteric meaning of a Russian peasant marriage. Her other ballets were ingenious satires, works which by their outlook denied them permanence. *The Blue Train*, created for Anton Dolin, showed the use of acrobatic technique with a classical ballet plastique. It was a satire on the frequenters of the Riviera, handsome athletes, golf and tennis champions, and bathers. *Les Biches*, with music by Poulenc and admirable interpretative scenery by Marie Laurencin, was a vicious commentary on a group of modern nymphs, ladies of pleasure, and their reactions when three handsome athletes entered their establishment. It was disguised in England under the grossly misleading title of *The House Party*.

Nijinska has been unfortunate in her ballets. The Diaghileff material denied them the permanence that their choreography demanded. Later, she did magnificent work for Ida Rubinstein with *Bolero*, *La Valse*, *La Bienaimée*, *Les Noces de Psyché et de l'Amour*, seen only for a few weeks. For her own very short-lived company she produced *Les Comédiens Jaloux*, *Beethoven Variations*, and *Hamlet*. All these works deserved a permanent company to present them. Her influence on dancing, however, has been profound. Lifar, Lichine, Dolin, Shabelevsky, Verchinina, Morosova, Ashton, and others all owe an immense debt to her training.

When she left Diaghileff her place was taken by Georges Balanchine, who came to him more formed than either Massine or Nijinska. Balanchine, a pupil of the Imperial schools and a fine musician, had begun to emerge during the Revolution, but his work was considered too artistically revolutionary for Russia and he left with a small group of dancers. His ballets for Diaghileff came during a bad period, and, though they caused a sensation, the public had dwindled to a small and rather precious clique. The best known were *La Chatte*, *The Gods go a-begging*, *Barabau*, *Apollon Musagète*, and *Le Fils Prodigue*, not one of which survives. They were ingenious and intensely personal distortions of classicism that promptly dated as none of the earlier Diaghileff ballets had done.

The last choreographer of the company was Serge Lifar. In

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Stravinsky's *Le Renard*, under the guidance of Larionov of the grotesque, he tried the interesting experiment of p movement done by both dancers and acrobats, but h the necessary experience to get the most out of it.

This long experimental phase produced many in results, but on the whole it was based on the sensations Diaghileff had learned from the scandals of the Nijinsky. In much of the work Diaghileff himself did not believe. frightened of old age and of being superseded, and was i in a mad chase after youth. These experiments would ev have killed ballet. They ended just in time, and there is that had Diaghileff lived he himself would have turned on them. His last performance ended with a ma revival of *The Swan Lake*, in which Spessivtseva, *ballerina par excellence*, shone.

The company held in it the seeds of the future. Li as choreographer and *premier danseur* to the original ballet, the Paris Opéra, and has dominated the dance t since. Tcherkas went to the Opéra Comique. Balanch Grigorieff were among the founders of the de Basil C Ninette de Valois founded the Vic-Wells Ballet, and M and Dolin were its first stars. Massine is still the bigge in ballet today. The company as an entity died with founder, but so living was his inspiration that fragme took root all over the world and today dominate the who ment. Bolm is settled in Chicago, Balanchine four American Ballet in New York, Nijinska worked in Buen Nemtchinova and Zvereff went to Kovno. Everywhere t of Diaghileff lives on.

He died in Venice in 1929, and his mortal remains lie there.

### (II) ANNA PAVLOVA

#### (i) *An exception to the rule*

Outside of Russia Anna Pavlova was greatly misund by the very people who should best have appreciated her. Were she to return today she would gain a new and f critical audience.

Such a statement about an artist whose name is to synonymous with dancing may seem a paradox. It is

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Pavlova was seen and admired the world over, but largely by people who were not deeply interested in the art of ballet, who would flock to the Winter Garden Pavilion to see Kreisler one week, Harry Lauder the next, and Pavlova the next. They went into raptures at her daintiness, marvelled at the fact that she could dance on the points of her toes. They most certainly missed the essentials of her art, a fact that worried her in spite of her success. One very definite effect upon those audiences the world over, apart from a memory of beauty to light up a drab existence, was to determine them to have their daughters taught dancing. Schools sprang up like mushrooms in her wake. When I have asked countless dancers all over the world what made them start, the answer is more often than not: "Mother saw Pavlova," or "I saw Pavlova." There has never been so great a propagandist force for the art of dancing: England, the Dominions, the Colonies, America, Mexico, South America, Java, China, Japan all saw and marvelled.

The small clique of people who really enjoyed ballet, who could discuss it in an amazing technical jargon, stood aloof. To them ballet meant one thing alone: the surprises in music, décor, and choreography brought them yearly by Diaghileff. That and that alone meant ballet. They had very little conception of dancing itself as a great interpretative art.

When I first met Pavlova she said to me: "Are you on my side or Diaghileff's?" At the time the remark seemed to me unnecessary and I could not grasp its significance. It was many years before I understood it clearly, after both Pavlova and Diaghileff were dead. There were sides and there should not have been; a proper understanding of the art, such as that of the great critic André Levinson, consisted of a balance between the two. Both Pavlova and Diaghileff were the architects of contemporary ballet. Had one of them alone been responsible the result would have been a leaning tower of Pisa; certainly a good deal less stable, ready to be destroyed by the first gale of criticism.

"Pavlova and Diaghileff set out on the journey together. Pavlova was one of Diaghileff's main inspirations. He was to go to Paris to show this amazing product of Russian Ballet.

Diaghileff held modern views; we have seen the effect of the reaction on his group of what was being produced at the

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Maryinsky. Pavlova also was a rebel, a romantic who wished to escape from the pure virtuosity of classicism.

Pavlova was *The Dying Swan*, and Fokine's one-person ballet was truly a manifesto of the new choreographic outlook, difficult as such a conception may appear to us today.

Let us take the Swan Princess of *Swan Lake* and Fokine's creation. In the first the Swan was undisguisedly a *ballerina* who used the story to reveal her gifts as a dancer. If she was an outstanding personality and a dramatic actress as well, so much the better. She could make it more interesting than it actually was. *The Dying Swan* was never an excuse for pyrotechnics. In technique it was absurdly simple—any pupil could master the steps in a short time; but the steps were only the beginning, the means to an end, and the end was to interpret the atmosphere of the music and to convey a tragedy. *The Dying Swan* showed the death of an ephemeral creature and not the prowess of a *ballerina*. As such, it was the manifesto of Fokine's new romanticism. At the start Pavlova's path, Fokine's path, and Diaghileff's path were identical.

(n)

Anna Pavlova was born in St. Petersburg, a weak and premature child, on January 31st, 1882. She was not expected to live. She was removed to Ligovo, in the country outside the city, and the air soon proved beneficial. Her love of the country, her direct contact with nature, were to colour her entire artistic outlook, and many of her best-known dances are an interpretation of nature: *The Dragonfly*, *The Californian Poppy*, *Autumn Leaves*.

As a holiday treat she was taken to see a matinée of *The Sleeping Princess*, as so many children were to be taken to see her and with the same result. From that moment her mind was made up. Her mother took her to the Imperial schools, but to her bitter disappointment she was too young. Pupils were not received before the age of ten (a warning to the impatient parent of today), and she still had two more years to wait. During those two years her resolve grew still stronger.

When the time came, she had to face a dreaded test. There were about a hundred candidates, with only seven or eight vacancies, and a formidable jury of directors and dancers past

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and present. Health was an essential and Pavlova was still frail. It speaks well for the discernment of the judges that she was among those selected. The course took seven years and consisted not only of dancing but of an excellent general and artistic education. She was taught by A. Oblakov, the former *ballerina* Vasem, and an outstanding actor-dancer Paul Gerdt, pupil of Johannsen. Gerdt took an enormous interest in his unusual pupil, teaching her in such a way as to turn her frailty into an asset. She finished her schooling at the age of seventeen with the high grade of "first dancer."

The later Valerian Svetloff, an enlightened critic, describes her début.

"I found myself in a cosy little corner, in the lighted, warm green realm of the dryads. This little corner was the Mikhailovsky Theatre and the dryads proved to be unreal, for they were represented by ordinary pupils of the theatrical school. . . .

"The jury sat in the front row, putting down marks to the dryads. This alone somewhat destroyed the illusion. . . .

"It was on this evening that for the first time the public saw the pupil, Pavlova, and it was on this evening that for the first time she attracted the attention of everybody. . . . With childish ingenuousness she acted a *scène de coquetterie* with a young peasant and with playful wantonness danced with the imaginary dryads. All this was youthfully gay and pretty, and nothing more need be said, except that the play of the child's features in the scene with the peasant was already full of expression, and one had the feeling that here was something individual, something that was not learnt by rote at school. But in the solo variation from *The Vestal Virgin* one already felt something more, something that made it possible for one, without posing as a prophet, to foresee in the youthful dancer a future great artist."

Valerian Svetloff, my master as a critic, followed this career step by step, outliving Pavlova by several years. May he rest in peace in a heaven where Taglioni and his own beloved Pavlova for ever dance.

Pavlova continued for some time as a pupil, when already on the stage, learning in Johannsen's perfection classes. But one generation separated Johannsen from Vestris. Pavlova was of the real aristocracy of ballet.

Within a few years she had made an immense reputation, scaling it with her interpretation of *Giselle*. Her ethereal qualities,

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in striking contrast to the more robust strength of her contemporaries, awoke memories of Taglioni and suggested a new romanticism. In 1905 she became a pupil of Cecchetti, adding Italian strength and precision to her frail grace. The dancer, unlike any other artist, is always a pupil even at the very height



of her fame, and Cecchetti continued to be her master for many years. One of the greatest differences between the *ballerina* of yesterday and of today was the realisation that learning is never finished. The *ballerina* of today, once famous, has not the opportunity to increase her knowledge, even when she has the desire. Pavlova may have ruled her own company as a complete autocrat, but there was always someone to whom she was the pupil in need of guidance and correction.

Pavlova's first journey abroad was to Riga in 1908, with a small company, and the following year she visited Scandinavia and Germany. It was the beginning of her triumphal campaign.

### (iii)

Her successes abroad played their part in deciding Diaghileff to undertake his adventure. Fokine, the chosen choreographer of the new movement, had found in Pavlova a true inspiration. "She is the greatest *ballerina* in the world, excelling both in classicism and in character. Like a Taglioni she doesn't dance, but floats; of her, also, one might say that she could walk over a cornfield without bending an ear."

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So spoke Diaghileff to Gabriel Astruc one evening at Paillard's when the question of bringing Russian Ballet to Paris first arose. And Pavlova came to Paris to dance with the Diaghileff Ballet. Of her Jean Louis Vaudoyer wrote: "Mademoiselle Pavlova is to dancing what a Racine is to poetry, a Poussin to painting, a Gluck to music." But, in spite of this praise from an exceptionally understanding critic, Pavlova was overshadowed in the press by Nijinsky in *Les Sylphides* and Ida Rubinstein in *Cleopatra*. Today, this seems difficult to understand. But in Paris in 1909 a male dancer was a complete novelty, and also Diaghileff was personally interested in launching his protégé. The "Biblical Rubinstein," who posed rather than danced and who was the centrepiece of a sensational scene, being unwrapped from her mummy clothes to appear in all her striking beauty, represented the exotic element expected from the Russians. Whatever the cause, this distribution of praise altered the career of Pavlova and with it the history of ballet. The first poster of the Russian Ballet bore her portrait, she was a part, a large part of the inspiration, but she left at the end of the first season.

This departure left behind a permanent trace of bitterness, and Diaghileff was never fair to Pavlova, going out of his way to extol an obviously inferior *ballerina*, comparatively speaking, at her expense. Pavlova clearly remained his ideal, hence the note of hostility when he said: "Pavlova was never really interested in art as such. The only thing that mattered to her was virtuosity, and she is a virtuoso without equal. When first I wanted her to do Stravinsky's *The Firebird*, especially designed for her, she declared that she wouldn't dance to such horrible music."

This estimate of Pavlova as primarily a virtuoso is patently ridiculous. She was never a virtuoso, and, judged by such standards, there were and are many far greater than she. She revolted against virtuosity in the same way as Fokine and Diaghileff himself had done. She was greatly interested in art, only her viewpoint began to differ, partly no doubt through reaction against Diaghileff.

She saw the art of ballet menaced by modern tendencies and rallied to its defence. The phrase: "Are you on my side or Diaghileff's?" was for her full of meaning, especially spoken at a time when he was on the extreme Left and she, as if to balance him, on the extreme Right. She danced for him once

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again as a guest artist during the coronation season in 1911. The rest of her career consists of voyages and triumphs right up to the day of her death.

Diaghileff's aesthetic was a personal one, but expressed through the medium of others; consequently it was by its very nature more objective. Pavlova's was expressed through her own mind and body. She was surrounded by a company, but that company was a background and her whole balletic conception was subjective, whether this was her conscious aim or not. In fact, it was not, for she thought of ballet in the wider sense, even though the word was always spelt Pavlova.

Early in her travels the Russian and Polish members in her company came to blows, and she found it impossible to manage them. From this moment she deliberately filled her company with English dancers. Their docility was the first point in their favour. Later, their aptitude for the dance became more apparent. During her lifetime the Pavlova company was of no importance; when she died it became of outstanding importance. She had trained a whole generation. If they did not make a name as individuals, they became teachers and missionaries. The discipline she had given them and the type of girl that she selected proved that ballet was a possible career for the carefully brought up "daughters of gentlemen," and not an excuse for a life of frivolity. From both sides of the stage Pavlova's value as a propagandist cannot be over-estimated, and that propaganda continues as well as the inspiration of her art. What type of artist was she? What did she express and how does she fit into the history of ballet?

### (iv)

It is best to begin with a physical portrait. I have already mentioned her fragility; it was only in appearance when she began her career, for she enjoyed robust health until the day of her untimely death. Physically, she was remarkable, with long, perfectly proportioned arms that accentuated the large movements so characteristic of the Russian school; exceptionally well-modelled legs showing none of the bulging, over-developed muscle so characteristic of many dancers; strong, slender ankles, and a highly developed instep as strong as steel. Her face was not beautiful in a conventional sense; it was interesting and it

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was the perfect instrument for her art. She could assume beauty at will: the wild beauty of the Bacchante, the exotic beauty of the gipsy, or the sweet prettiness of the girl in such fragment as *Noël*. When she was no longer young and her fair repose betrayed some of the ravages of an exceptionally hard life, it would on the stage appear still young and almost girlish, not the result of make-up—I watched her often enough from the wings—but of artistry. There was very little difference between the young Pavlova and the Pavlova of the last few years. The head was beautifully placed on the shoulders. She moved with a natural grace, which teaching had accentuated, and many of her dances were dances of grace rather than show pieces.

Her range was a wide one, combining both Taglioni and Elssler; but she excelled in the portrayal of the pathetic, of some ephemeral being that came to life and then withered and died all on a summer's day.

Much has been written of her love of birds and flowers. Such topics are a joy to the press agent, but the birds are all too often caged and the flowers wired. In the case of Pavlova the close observation of nature and the identification of herself with nature has a very definite meaning. Her Swan, Dragonfly, and Poppy were not portraits in the exact sense of the word, but they were translations that could have been made only by some one who really felt in complete harmony with nature. What struck me the most about Pavlova was not just the fact that her dancing seemed entirely spontaneous, but that it seemed a natural phenomenon, like the ripple of a pond, the opening of a flower, or the leaves being whisked and whirled by the wind. Such imaginative descriptions may seem extravagant, especially in the English language, and they are used by a critic who usually mistrusts them profoundly, but they represent the only manner in which one can convey something of the impression created by Pavlova. It is, perhaps, because of this gift of appearing natural that one was inclined to take her for granted and only to begin to analyse her after her death.

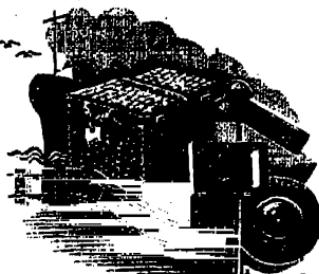
It is always said that she rose above her material by which Benois has aptly termed "a theatrical miracle," that she danced the dances of every day as no one had ever done, and this is true. When she died a number of roles died with her. She was creative, for she had created these roles out of almost nothing.

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pletely expressive artist, the equal of a Duse, a Bernhardt, or Chaliapine. She stands as an ideal and an inspiration, and value as an influence lives on after her.

The phrase "Pavlova as an ideal and an inspiration" must not be misunderstood, as it so often is when people ignorant talk of "a second Pavlova." Had Pavlova been a second Taglioni she would never have made an impression. She was the first and only Pavlova. There may be equally great dancers in the future, not reflections of Pavlova, but fresh personalities. The machinery that produced a Pavlova has been broken by economic conditions, but true genius will find a way.

The only manner in which to understand Pavlova as an ideal is to understand her attitude towards her art and the true extent of her accomplishment. She started with lavish natural gifts and she transformed them into conscious artistry, ceaselessly learning and perfecting what she had been given.



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and even a great conception like *The Dying Swan* has become an impossibility without her.

But those phrases are also used as a reproach and must be examined from that point of view. The dancer is a part of complicated organism, and her personality and artistry must not be allowed to become the sole *raison d'être* of ballet. There is no doubt that *Les Sylphides* was more worthy of her gifts than the indifferent *Chopiniana* in which she danced; that *The Firebird* is a living work of art where *Don Quixote* was killed at birth by its wretched music; that *The Fairy Doll* has no artistic justification. This is admitted, the whole trend of this book has been to explain and insist upon such facts. The Pavlova of a greater work, *Giselle*, was the greatest Pavlova of all. While we accept this, we cannot blame Pavlova herself. There was and is machinery into which she could be fitted. She had left the Maryinsky far behind, and after the first few years the atmosphere of the Diaghileff Ballet was a hostile one. We can see Pavlova even in such great works as *La Boutique Fantastique*, or *The Good-humoured Ladies*. She was an organisation in her own as well as an individual; there were the Maryinsky, Diaghileff, and Pavlova. That is the important point to remember. Maryinsky and Diaghileff could continue, but Pavlova was as ephemeral as the beings she so truly interpreted. The machinery that grew up around her was, by its very nature, temporary and a compromise. If we do not remember her we will not bear critical examination. There was nothing more pathetic than the few performances of the Pavlova Ballet without Pavlova. This machinery, however, was worthily conceived. She could as a concert dancer have attracted the masses. People in any case, came to see *The Dying Swan* rather than anything else. It is a tribute to her conscience as an artist that she realises that only in a large *ensemble* could she really shine. There is truth in the supposition that jealousy prevented her from appearing with other great artists. She may or may not have been jealous, but she outshone her generation and had nothing to fear. She shone alone against a drab but worthy background, because she was an exception to every rule and it is impossible to find a lasting framework round an exception.

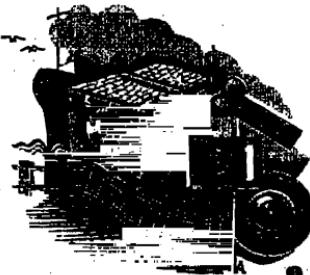
Her importance in the history of ballet and as one of the founders of the contemporary movement lies in the fact that she proved to the world that the ballet dancer could be a complete

## MAKERS OF MODERN BALLET

pletely expressive artist, the equal of a Duse, a Bernhardt, or a Chaliapine. She stands as an ideal and an inspiration, and her value as an influence lives on after her.

The phrase "Pavlova as an ideal and an inspiration" must not be misunderstood, as it so often is when people ignorantly talk of "a second Pavlova." Had Pavlova been a second Taglioni she would never have made an impression. She was the first and only Pavlova. There may be equally great dancers in the future, not reflections of Pavlova, but fresh personalities. The machinery that produced a Pavlova has been broken by economic conditions, but true genius will find a way.

The only manner in which to understand Pavlova as an ideal is to understand her attitude towards her art and the true extent of her accomplishment. She started with lavish natural gifts and she transformed them into conscious artistry, ceaselessly learning and perfecting what she had been given.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### PERSONALITIES OF CONTEMPORARY

#### (I) COLONEL DE BASIL.

*Limited monarchy and contemporary Russian*

(I).

COLONEL DE BASIL will never receive full credit for his achievement in popularising ballet. The legend will always intervene. Yet no two men could have different in personality, aim, method, and achievement can be no direct comparison.

The ballet from 1909 till 1929 was always, as we see the expression of Diaghileff's personal tastes; the programme depended upon his enthusiasm of the moment; was consistent in his enthusiasms. He was still very spirit the lordly owner of a private troupe. Detail was to him all-important. De Basil is far more. He is interested in reaching as wide a public as possible for general effect and not the perfection of detail. When it took a year or more to conceive a ballet, de Basil would spend months or even weeks. The choice of work does not depend upon his inner artistic urge.

These marked differences give us an opportunity of comparing the two great masters of the contemporary Russian Ballet. The change from Diaghileff to de Basil was nearly as great as the change from Ivanov to Diaghileff; Emperor, nobleman, simple man of the world. We can best appreciate both the situation and the difference by examining the economic position. In the Imperial days the ballet was a pampered hothouse flower, denied nothing that would help it flourish. Diaghileff brought it out into the open air, where it had to grow under the same care as is given to the flowers of the Casino at Monte Carlo. De Basil has made it perfectly hardy, able to survive in the frozen north or the Middle West. The Diaghileff ballet was never financially self-supporting; it evolved an idea, regardless of cost, and then found money from his entourage of wealthy backers. Under no circumstances did he modify a scheme. The Imperial Theatres maintained a lavish production; by their standards Diaghileff's was simple, but of the masterly simplicity that costs nothing.

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dress was not ready-made; just because of the simplicity of its cut it had to come from the finest *couturière*. It is quite futile to speculate as to what would have happened had Diaghileff lived. The economic crisis would have made an enormous difference to his method of working. He disliked compromise. De Basil was the type of man that the Russian Ballet needed at that moment, and he succeeded beyond a doubt. Under de Basil for the first time in history repertory ballet became self-supporting. This meant the necessity of appealing to a world public, and of taking into account what that public wanted. In doing so de Basil saved the ambulant ballet, and no comparison with Diaghileff can be allowed to rob him of the credit. He had vision and courage. In its artistic detail ballet may have suffered, but on the whole the first years of de Basil were artistically healthier than the last rather weary and disillusioned years of Diaghileff.

It is interesting to consider the problem that faced de Basil. To the world at large, ballet was one individual of genius, Anna Pavlova. To a very small coterie of artists it meant the aspirations of another individual, Serge Diaghileff. The death of Pavlova meant that the masses no longer had an interest in ballet; the death of Diaghileff that the artists and patrons were openly hostile to any attempt at forming a company. "Diaghileff is dead," said a French critic; "with him all the fairy-like images of his teeming imagination have become but memories." They called him "*ce prodigieux animateur*," wrote reams about the glories of the Russian invasion of 1909. They did not analyse his achievement in a critical spirit, and they did not for a moment think of the art itself that had started at the court of their own Louis XIV. They were writing the obituary of ballet.

It is fatal to think of an art solely in terms of an individual, and the effects of that mistake had first of all to be overcome by de Basil. In Paris he has never completely overcome it. He succeeded, because he is essentially a fighter, because he did not attempt to continue the Diaghileff tradition, and through the help of René Blum at Monte Carlo and certain of the Diaghileff artists who were not defeatists.

De Basil was not a theatre man by profession. He was a colonel of a Cossack division, a soldier with a distinguished war record. Of that there is no doubt, though his detractors have even sought to deny it. In any case, it has no bearing on his

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theatrical life. After the usual hardships of emigration, he started a theatrical and concert agency and a small troupe of dancers that was more or less a family affair. He even took part in it himself. Next, he became a director with Prince Tseretelli of the Russian opera, coming to the Lyceum in 1931. The opera gave a few evenings devoted to ballet. These were indifferent, but they revealed the public demand and were his first lessons in running a company. He left the opera to concentrate on ballet. Diaghileff was dead and he was alone in the field.

With René Blum, director of the theatre, he formed a troupe for the Monte Carlo season. Balanchine, Diaghileff's last choreographer, worked with him, as well as the experienced stage director Serge Grigorieff, in harness since 1909. The main problem was the personnel of the company, and there he made a bold decision that assured his success. The Paris studios of the great Maryinsky *ballerinas*, Preobrajenska, Kchesinska, Egorova, Trefilova, who had settled down to teach after the Revolution, contained a group of child prodigies. These thirteen-year-olds differed considerably from the previous generations of Russian dancers. Suffering had given them a precocity unknown to their carefully cloistered elders. It had given them a close contact with humanity. Also, compared to their predecessors, their training was perfunctory, but two factors gave them exceptional technical facility.

Teaching had made extraordinary progress, and they were being taught by the most experienced dancers of their day; also the modern girl is physically stronger and more of a natural athlete than the corseted girl of pre-War days. These children were able to perform feats of virtuosity that had rarely been attempted before.

The *fouetté* is a case in point. More than anything else it made the popularity of the new ballet. The public is always over-susceptible to virtuosity. The *fouetté* was first launched, if not invented, by the Italian, Pierrina Legnani. In the third act of *Swan Lake* her series of thirty-two caused a sensation, eager *bulletomates* counting aloud, as if it had been an exhibition of athletics, which in many respects it was. The sensitive critic found it out of place in this romantic ballet, though, in fact, there was a slender dramatic justification, since the bewitched girl is meant to dazzle the Prince by her brilliance. For a long time no Russian could emulate Legnani, until finally Kchesinska

## PERSONALITIES OF CONTEMPORARY BALLET

found out the secret, amidst national rejoicing. Even then, it was by no means universal, neither Pavlova nor Karsavina adopting it. This rare trick of the multiple *souetté*, not properly in the dancer's repertoire, became a commonplace to the young dancers of the emigration. They could perform thirty-two, sixty-four, and more, if necessary, and they did it with ease and precision. It was now no more a trick but a part of the current language of dancing, and as such, the choreographer could use it expressively to tell his story and not to surprise the audience. We have in a previous chapter seen the slender division between dancing and acrobatics.<sup>1</sup> The first ballets in the de Basil repertory all contained *souettés*, and the *souettés* entranced the audience, gave the critics something to discuss, and launched thirteen-year-old Toumanova and Baronova as stars. The fact that they had other merits speedily dawned on the public. They attracted immediate attention by their technique, they retained it through their artistic instinct. It was too early to discuss conscious artistry.

De Basil banked everything upon the success of three unknown children: Toumanova, Baronova, and Riabouchinska. He was careful to give them the support of experienced artists, but the onus of the performance fell on them, Danilova only joining the company later, and with them began the world-wide popularity of ballet. In Diaghileff's day ballet as a whole rather than individual dancers had attracted the attention; with de Basil it was the opposite. The young dancers became stars, the public went to see them, and remained to enjoy the art.

The new company made its début in Monte Carlo in 1932, and was a success. In Paris also the critics acclaimed it. But there was still a difficult time ahead, during which de Basil fully proved his fine powers of leadership. The company toured Holland, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland, in a constant struggle to survive. The expenses were heavy, the repertory small. During those difficult times, when salaries were delayed and artists hungry, not one member of the company deserted and the *ensemble* was preserved. It required not only courage but an unusual knowledge of human nature to keep the enterprise alive. De Basil received an attractive offer to come to England in 1932, but declined, feeling that the repertoire was not yet sufficient. When he opened at the Alhambra on July 4th, 1933, he was in

<sup>1</sup> See page 36.

## PERSONALITIES OF CONTEMPORARY BALLET

value to it, it has been a centre for creation and recreation. The artists have time to rest and study, new ballets can be planned and then tried out on a sophisticated public, the scenery and costumes, worn through travel, can be renewed. To complete the loss René Blum started a new company, engaging Fokine to mount fresh works and supervise the production of his masterpieces. There may be a certain advantage in two large ambulant companies, so long as these are friendly. But if they play at the same time in the same city and compete for one another's artists, the public becomes confused and the art as a whole suffers.

The second serious split, between de Basil and Massine, took place in 1937. Whatever the definite cause, which cannot concern us here, there is always the general one of a lack of understanding between artist and manager. There is glory and to spare for each, but unfortunately at the time neither can realise it, and the result is conflict where there should be harmony.

Massine left de Basil to become the centre-piece of still another company, "The World of Art," that acquired René Blum's company and its works. With Massine went some of the most prominent de Basil artists, and de Basil changed his Prime Minister for the third time and secured Fokine as choreographer.

Now, it is obvious from this bald account alone that Russian Ballet cannot flourish artistically in such an atmosphere of change. It takes many years to form an *ensemble* that can be destroyed in a few days. Also, the artists become so unsettled by intrigue that they are incapable of giving their undivided attention to the art. At the present moment the Russian Ballet is split into three groups—the Ballet Theatre and the Monte Carlo Ballet in America, and de Basil's company at Buenos Ayres in the Argentine. Many of the original dancers have deserted ballet for musical comedy and the films. One can only regret that "politics" have caused the disintegration of so remarkable an institution, and benefit by the example.

I have dealt with these ballet "politics" here, for a definite reason, before trying to assess the work done during the five years' boom. I believe that they are caused by the lack of a fixed creative policy fully as much as that they are the cause of it: the signs of an artistic degeneracy, though a very brilliant one. All the symptoms are present, even the unbalanced hysteria of an audience on the subject of individual performers

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a desperate situation. Within a week he was safe; the ballet boom had started in England. Shortly before, he had suffered his first loss, that of Balanchine, who left with Toumanova. Massine came in as choreographer and then as artistic adviser, and Baronova in *Les Présages* danced her way to fame. She was just over thirteen.

In December 1933 the young company made its American débüt, the first of a series of yearly visits from coast to coast, under the ægis of a great impresario, S. Hurok, who revived an interest in an art that was moribund, associated in the mind of the American public with presentation numbers in movie houses.

### (ii)

The partnership of de Basil and Massine, which has undergone so many vicissitudes in and out of legal hands, has been a fruitful one.

It should be sufficient in a survey of contemporary ballet to analyse the ballets and the artists and so to give a complete picture of the scene. Unfortunately, in any discussion of Russian Ballet this is not enough. There are a number of unpredictable and extraneous events that occur to alter the whole direction of the art. During Diaghileff's lifetime, so great was his prestige that he had little to fear from opposition. He was the actual "inventor of a recipe"—his own words—and not one of the many would-be heirs. In contemporary Russian Ballet politics, caused by the clash of personalities, is an all-important factor that the critic-historian cannot possibly ignore without giving an erroneous picture of the scene.

De Basil and his first collaborator, René Blum, soon found themselves in active disagreement. Blum had inherited Diaghileff's throne at Monte Carlo, de Basil his effective leadership of a troupe. Save during the seasons at Monte Carlo, Blum had lost active association with the company. Through this division the art received a serious set-back. René Blum, a man of great culture in close contact with the leading artists of the day, could have contributed a great deal to the common cause. When the split came and the partnership was finally dissolved, de Basil lost Monte Carlo, and Monte Carlo is a trump card. It has never been a great proposition commercially, but from the earliest years of the Diaghileff company, who attached the greatest

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that was also so prominent in the great decline following the romantic period.

In my chapter on Diaghileff I analysed the tendencies of the ballets produced at various periods and showed how the art had developed. The period of his greatest creative strength was when he produced that masterpiece of ballet, *Petrouchka*. The essence of his artistic leadership was discovery and harmony—the discovery of choreographers, musicians, and decorative artists, and the collaboration of these. The post-Diaghileff ballet has little to show in the way of discovery. It has developed dancing and choreography (but not fresh choreographers), neglected music and décor.

### (iii)

Its works fall under two headings: revivals and creations. It would be obvious to say that these revivals presented in a less perfect way works that had been done to perfection in the past; obvious and grossly unfair. There is always a type of mind ready to condemn the present in the name of the past: the type of mind that would have prevented Fokine in the name of Petipa and that so nearly succeeded that Fokine produced his masterpieces in exile. Even in the case of the most sincere, memory is flatteringly deceptive. Diaghileff understood this when he said that in order to revive *Scheherazade* it would be necessary to heighten all the colours, since memory would have made them seem many tones brighter. These revivals may have been given without the finish of former days, but the young artists have brought out other interesting qualities, and could we suddenly see the original productions we might easily find in them much that is stilted and old-fashioned. *Les Sylphides*—a manifestation of the romanticism that is ageless—is a great enough work to be interpreted by every generation, and every generation will stress some fresh aspect of its beauty. The very youth of its interpreters in 1933 was a quality. But in this same *Sylphides* one could see a lack of taste in production that is significant, the use of an enlarged painting by Corot as a back-cloth. Benois' original décor still exists and could easily have been used. Such an idea could never have entered into Diaghileff's head. His work was planned as a whole. Today, the idea seems pleasant enough and without much deliberation it passed. Also the dancers have adopted a glamorous make-up

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from Hollywood, a little shocking in so fragile a work. There is insufficient time for thought when economics make hurry and constant travel a necessity. De Basil inherited much of the Diaghileff repertoire, and we must be grateful to him for making it live again as well as he has done. Criticism on that score is superficial.

It is in the new works that this brilliant degeneracy can be felt: the tendency to "get away with things." To start with, the new repertoire is, with one exception, by choreographers already famous before or immediately after the War. *Massine produced his first work in 1915, today he is still the biggest figure in contemporary ballet.* The new ballet has not yet produced its own choreographer capable of leading the young generation of dancers. Choreographers may be born and not made, but they must certainly find a congenial atmosphere in which to develop. I have discussed Diaghileff's strength as a pedagogue. No talent could escape him. Today, there is no one who can guide the budding choreographer; consequently there is no young choreography. In a decade this will be obvious. It is the major failure of post-Diaghileff ballet, a business living on its capital, which is fortunately immense and can tide it over a few more years.

The one exception is David Lichine. That he has natural ability he has abundantly proved, but there is a doubt whether that ability will ever be fully exploited. His first two works, *Nocturne* and *Les Imaginaires*, were failures, and clearly through no fault of his own. They were rushed on, their material was ill-digested, and Lichine was not surrounded, as Massine and Balanchine had been, by artists of experience ready to guide him in matters of taste and planning. His third ballet, *Le Pavillon*, to well-arranged music by Borodin, showed his best work to date. It was a true romantic ballet arranged with great skill especially in the handling of the *corps de ballet*, always a good sign. The beginner can often arrange an effective *solo* or *adagio* out of his own muscular feeling. His fourth ballet, *Francesca da Rimini*, has been his most spectacular. He succeeded in telling a dramatic story with great power, handling climax after climax until the final telling scene of Francesca's murder with a magnificent sense of the theatre. It was, indeed, grand theatre, if a trifle "ham," but not much else, and again through no fault of Lichine's. He was given the time and the opportunity to study in Italy, but the music was ill-chosen and contradicted all the

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sound-principles of ballet composition. Tchaikovsky's symphonic poem, *Francesca da Rimini*, whatever its merits as music, was written round an idea that is entirely different from the scenario given to Lichine, with the result that in whole passages music and action clash. Such a positive story demands music commissioned for the purpose. There is the exception of *Scheherazade*, but then the action was deliberately fitted to the music by such a skilled committee as Diaghileff, Fokine, Benois, and Bakst.

Lichine's next ballet, a revival of *The Gods Go a-Begging* to new choreography, was thrown on in a few weeks. It has its moments of charm, it was beautifully interpreted, but haste marred the climax, one of the weakest seen in ballet for a very long time. The whole work compared unfavourably with de Valois' version at Sadler's Wells, though the *solos* and the *adagio* were more effective. The English work was planned, the Russian just happened. Finally, in *Le Lion Amoureux*, the only opportunity Lichine was given to work to a commissioned score, that score was a handicap. It was impossible to fit to it a developed story, since in its manner and form it resembled the incidental music of a film. Once again it is important to stress the fact that neither Lichine nor the composer is to be blamed, but the system, or rather the lack of it. There should be a supervision that is both tactful and effective and that sees that score, story, and movement are suitably wedded. In his last production to be seen in England, *Protée*, he has produced a small work of great sensibility that justifies a strong belief in his future.

Lichine has had considerable success with the ballet *Graduation Ball*, shown in Australia in 1939. Lately he has been producing ballet for operette, musical comedy, and the films.

This sketch of the career of an exceptionally talented boy is revealing. By comparison with the other phases of ballet I have commented on, it shows that we have reached an unfortunate period of easy box-office success, difficult artistic success, and this may mark the end of the boom—the very word itself suggests a slump—instead of the beginning of something new which the youth of those concerned should announce.

### (iv)

The greatest and most sensational successes of the new Ballet have been Massine's three symphonies. These works have



IRINA BARONOVA  
The Queen of Shemakha  
in "Le Coq d'Or."



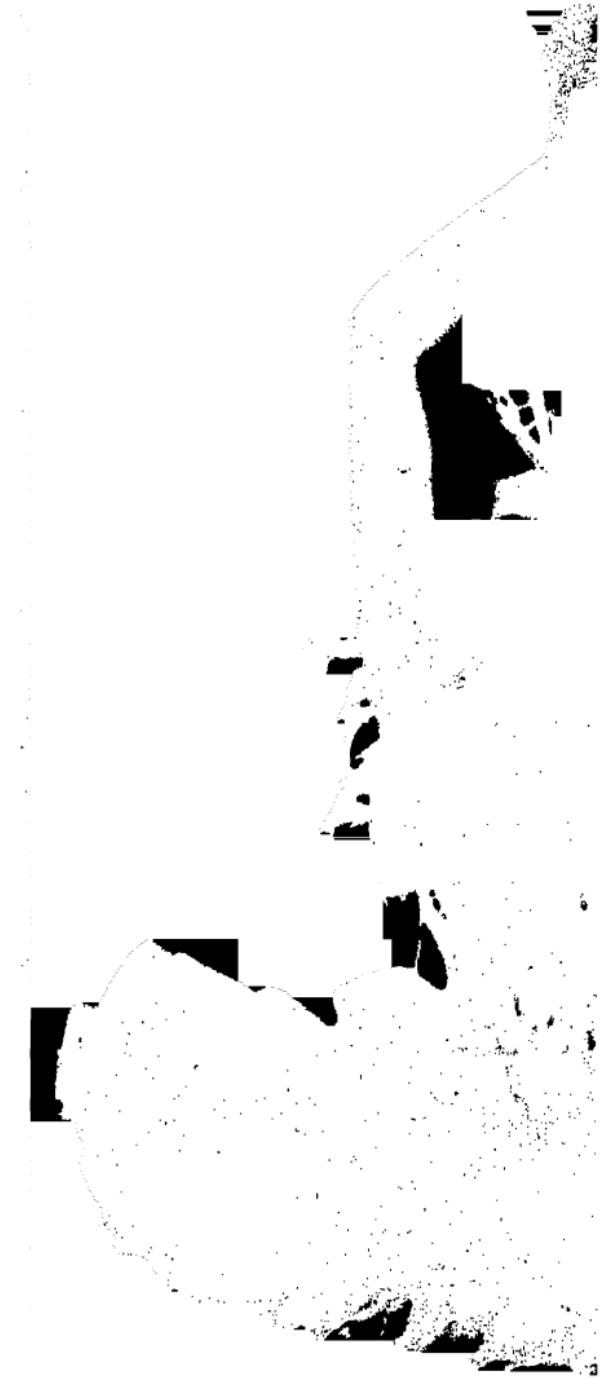
BERYL GREY in "Swan Lake"



ROBERT HELPMANN in "Comus"



TATIANA RIABOUCHINSKA de *Friandise*



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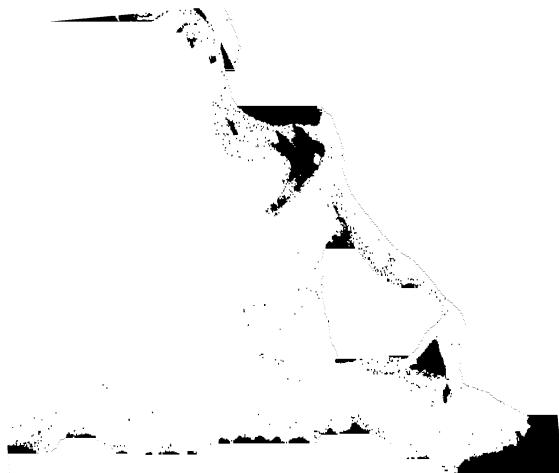


PAMELA MAY in "The Prospect Before Us"



SALLY GILMOUR in "Mephisto Waltz"

Tunbridge-Sa



Tunbridge-!

MARGOT FONTEYN in "Swan Lake"

Anthony



PAULINE CLAYDEN in "Promenade"

Anthony



Myra SHEARER in "Promenade"





(Below) TAMARA TOUMANOVÁ in "La Symphonie Fantastique"  
(Opposite) ALICIA MARKOVA in "Swan Lake"

Seymour  
Brewster





ORIEVA and DAVID LICHINE in "L'Après-midi d'un Faune"



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aroused a fierce controversy that has helped to popularise them.

I will summarise the arguments pro and con without myself taking a determined stand on either side, or, perhaps, taking yet a third position; not that I have ever believed in sitting on the fence, but because the evidence here seems to warrant it.

The musical purists maintain, and rightly so, that a symphony is a complete and independent work of art; consequently that anything that is added to it is completely superfluous; that it does not lend itself either to amplification or to illustration. In 1909 the musical purists made the same objection against *Les Sylphides*, reinforced by the fact that Chopin's music had to be orchestrated. While *Les Sylphides* and *Carnaval* are the beginnings of using music for ballet written for another purpose, one must not drive the comparison too far. No one claims that their music is *absolute* in the same sense as the symphonies, and the choreographer has some powers of selection denied him in a continuous forty-five-minute composition. I merely mention this early objection to show that the musical purist tends to think in terms of the concert-hall rather than of theatrical effectiveness. The ballet is essentially theatre, and good theatre can under certain circumstances excuse what is bad taste on paper. The musical purist is invariably right on paper. The main question in the case of the symphonies is whether the circumstances excuse the use of this particular music.

The ballet die-hard, frequently more emotional than thoughtful, replies with a number of arguments. His main contention is that the choreographer does not seek either to amplify or illustrate this absolute music; but to create movement that is parallel in thought. Also, he goes on to say that any music that inspires a muscular reaction is suitable for dancing, and that this music very clearly does or it would not be danced to at all. He finally begs the purist to stay away and let him enjoy his ballet symphony in peace, even if there are grave doubts about its artistic taste.

My own reaction is somewhat between the two. I believe that the symphony by its nature is unsuited to ballet and that the almost complete success of three symphonic ballets proves nothing, especially since two of them are not typical, and the one that is is the weakest. The ballet symphony can never develop into a school. These particular ballets are isolated experiments in which Massine has succeeded to an astonishing degree in

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creating a parallelism of movement and sound and in so doing has extended the repertoire of choreography. It is in the more architectural grouping, beautiful in itself, that one finds the impossibility of any parallelism. The music does not allow the dancers to leave the groups that have been assumed, and the breakaway is clumsy and suddenly separates motion from music. This is especially noticeable in the first part of Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique*. Both *Les Présages* (Tchaikovsky's 5th Symphony) and Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique* lend themselves to a story; in the second part of the Berlioz Massine has devised some of the noblest choreography of our age; in the second part of the Tchaikovsky some of the most moving and theatrically effective. It is in the Brahms that the choice of music has been the least happy. For the first many visits the plastically minded, as opposed to the musically minded, take in only the magnificent moving frescoes; it is with repeated visits that the difference between music and movement becomes noticeable and finally jars in such places as the *fouettés* and the *tours-en-l'air* of the final tableau. Such typical classroom virtuosity does not parallel the musical thought, which is lost when the music degenerates into a rhythmic accompaniment. These works are outstanding examples of great choreography, yet I would hesitate before calling them great ballets in the sense that *Petrouchka* is so unquestionably a great ballet. They lack that element of completeness. To use a colloquialism, "Massine has got away with it." Whether he or anyone else will do so again is another matter. The failure of the Beethoven 7th Symphony, apart from the noble second movement, shows that. They would be ill-advised to try.

With the exception of *La Symphonie Fantastique*, with its attractive settings by Bérard, the symphonics have failed decoratively, and decoration is an essential in a work that aims at a parallelism of impressions from eye and ear. Masson's much-debated backcloth in *Les Présages* had a definite aim: to continue the movement of the dancers, and its surrealism was a success that a more positive picture could not have been. But the costumes of Fate and Frivolity were banal in the extreme. In *Choreartium* nothing could have been farther from the spirit of the music than the trivial décor and costumes. This same work rehearsed in practice costume was doubly effective.

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(v)

Of the works to commissioned music *Jardin Public* was a failure, but to my mind not an entirely dishonourable one. Its failure was used to point out the merits and advantages of using well-established music. It did nothing of the kind, merely roving that one composer had failed in one score, and that particular composer a discovery of Diaghileff's. There was in this ballet at any rate a complete unity between music, story, and movement, and it failed as a whole, though much of the choreography deserved a better fate. *Union Pacific* was a success chiefly on account of the remarkable barman's dance that Fassine had given himself, but it was also a far cleverer ballet than one might at first think. It was a genuine balletic translation of Americana, based on "folk-lore," a *tour de force* for a Russian choreographer, just as Nabokoff's clever cacophony was based on popular melodies. The failure of *Le Lion moureux* we have already discussed.

This is scarcely an inspiring record on the musical side for six years' work, and the fact that Russian Ballet has had six years of success speaks a great deal for the capital upon which it has been living. *The encouragement and discovery of composers and writers is Russian Ballet's immediate task.*

(vi)

In this brief analysis of the work accomplished during his reign we have left de Basil, the man, out of the account in a way that has been quite impossible in the case of Diaghileff. Diaghileff as a dictator; de Basil, a strong man, is a limited monarch, that is the great difference. But after the almost aggressive individualism of a Diaghileff, Russian Ballet needed de Basil, and owes him a debt of gratitude that is sometimes grudgingly withheld.

Where the ballet today suffers is through artistic starvation. Diaghileff once said during a Monte Carlo *première*: "Were the theatre to burn down tonight, every creative artistic talent in Europe would perish." He was right, his audience was a complete artistic Who's Who. All were his friends, members of his parliament, the majority there as his guests. Today, the ballet no longer has such friends, it is completely surrounded and almost stifled by business executives, and the artist is called in

to do one definite job in a desperate hurry. We have seen the folly of that. Everyone in ballet is vitally interested in the other man's job. Economics may seem to demand this over-commercial attitude, but in the long run it is a singularly short-sighted policy, and policy is a wrong word to describe what actually is a case of muddling through. The Russian Ballet has inherited Diaghileff's works, but it is rather our own modest Sadler's Wells that has inherited his viewpoint; greatly helped by a permanent home, it is true.

The hope for Russian Ballet after a period of what can only be described as brilliant degeneracy lies in a speedy and complete union of the two conflicting groups—in artists, not lawyers—and in a programme that includes the creative painters and composers of the day: in less politics and more art. The dancing is healthy, though the dancers are sadly overworked, but the ballet itself is weak. Now that de Basil has accomplished the gigantic task of popularising the art, it rests with him and his advisers and in equal measure with Massine, still the dominating figure creatively, to give us something fresh and constructive. To mark time any longer is dangerous. The new Russian Ballet is as rich in names as any previous company. Its members must go forward together in complete harmony or their place will surely be taken by the many healthy young national movements that have been born of the urgent necessity for self-expression, and through the glorious example given them by Russian Ballet.

## (II) NINETTE DE VALOIS

Edris Stannus, an Irish dancer who assumed the name of a line of French kings, much to Diaghileff's disgust—he always insisted on spelling it Devalois—is the only personality with a double claim to belong to this section of our study. As an animator of the Diaghileff-de Basil type, she has founded a truly national ballet that is important enough to be considered internationally; as a choreographer she is a pioneer in England, as well as one of the two major women choreographers in the history of the art. She has still a third claim, as a teacher who has discovered and launched an entire company.

She started in the worst manner possible, as a child prodigy at a time when child prodigies and English (Irish) dancers were by no means the fashion. It was still necessary to adopt a

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change of name. De Valois herself *a changé tout cela*. She even survived such enthusiastic criticism as "that charming child genius" and "the child is a poem," tributes I have preserved in my collection of curiosities. De Valois was an admirable dancer with a fine technique and an intelligence that informed all her work. But it is not as a dancer that she gains her outstanding position in the history of ballet.

After a variety of engagements she joined the Diaghileff company in 1924 as a small *solist*, her finest work being the "finger variation" in *Aurora's Wedding*. She used her time there to study methods of teaching and production, a child among them taking notes; dancing was never an end in itself. Two years later she left the company, dissatisfied with the ballet aesthetic of the day. She founded a school of her own with what seemed at the time the pompous and ambitious title of the Academy of Choreographic Art. This she used as a headquarters, travelling to Dublin to produce for the Abbey Theatre and to Cambridge for the Festival Theatre. Her work in these theatres, in addition to her experience of pure ballet, decided her future bent. Working with actors unused to movement in the dancing sense, she was compelled to use theatrical production that would be effective. She gained at this time a rare conception of the relation between ballet and theatre. Fokine, a great producer quite apart from his choreography, was also trained in the dramatic schools. It is characteristic of de Valois that on the very first occasion that she met Robert Helpmann she said to him: "Something can be done with that face," thinking in a direction alien to the ordinary choreographer.

There seemed to be something a little smug and ridiculous about this young dancer who disapproved of the direction that the greatest of all companies was taking, and who formed her own Academy. It must have required an almost overpowering self-confidence. To have paused to examine the situation even for an instant would have meant failure. Thousands of dancers must have envied her the excellent position in the Russian Ballet, and she gave it up simply to follow a line of her own at a time when it was quite impossible for anyone but Diaghileff to gain a hearing. This stubborn determination against what seems at the time to be common sense is characteristic of Ninette de Valois.

The first works that she produced did not seem to justify her

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decision, even when one made due allowance for the materia available. They showed the urgent desire to express something strong, they were well produced, dull because she was so obviously in earnest and almost ridiculously young.

A critic who did not flair anything more than worthy determination at the time of *Rout*, a naive mixture of Central Europe and Celtic Twilight, can scarcely blame himself for a lack of perspicacity. There were violent extremes in de Valois' artistic conceptions, between brutal masculine strength and finicky, fluttering, feminine weakness. The one quality that characterised her work was musical conscientiousness, amounting at times to pedantry. She has a knowledge of musical construction that is rare in anyone.

Until the formation of the Camargo Society, 1930, she had proved nothing positive. I would even say, from my own observations and from the talk of dancers, that as a producer she was then inclined to drill all the personality out of her cast, counting the music till mathematics had driven the atmosphere away.

The first revelations were the Camargo productions, *Job* and *La Création du Monde*. Here were big conceptions treated in the grand manner. One hesitated to call them ballets, rather grudgingly even, but one began to look at de Valois in a new light, to see that she was neither smug nor cantankerous, but someone with a great deal to express and the necessary craft with which to express it. A pretty *Cephalus and Procris* and an intolerably dull *Origin of Design* seemed to confirm the original impression that she was not truly a choreographer. Their craft was competent, but they never came to life, certainly they never even gave a hint of the personality of their creator.

The Camargo Society undoubtedly had a marked effect on Ninette de Valois apart from the opportunity it gave her. It turned the earnest young rebel into someone who could value and understand the full meaning of collaboration. It brought her into contact with others who were trying to create, curbed some of her intolerance, turning it into a creative channel.

When Lilian Baylis summoned Ninette de Valois to work at the Old Vic, two women admirably calculated to understand one another met. Lilian Baylis had a one-track mind, the success of her theatre; de Valois also, the success of her ballet; and, since the tracks led in the same direction, the force was irresistible.

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The essence of Lilian Baylis's success was a knowledge of human nature and the bigness of character to put implicit faith in anyone in whom she had learned to believe. And she believed in de Valois enough to let the handful of girls composing the opera ballets grow into a permanent ballet company. Looked at in cold blood by someone who knows the full difficulties, both women seemed insane.

De Valois must undoubtedly have made a considerable sacrifice to undertake what seemed an incredibly uphill task. Her school was a commercial success and she was beginning to make a name. Unhesitatingly she threw all her resources into the new enterprise and closed the school, accompanied by her pupils and a charming dancer, Ursula Moreton, as assistant. The company in the beginning was merely an embellishment to the opera, and attracted very little attention. One had to be a blind patriot to talk of British Ballet. Lilian Baylis was willing to gamble on its success, de Valois was building deliberately and systematically. The Wells then engaged Alicia Markova (and, at times, Anton Dolin) as a guest artist. Markova had a very considerable public who learnt the way to Rosebery Avenue,<sup>1</sup> and the help that she gave the young enterprise was invaluable, though artistically, at the time, the partnership did not show great results. Markova was the solitary star, the Wells company a background devoid of personality. The ballets were built round Markova, the classics were revived for her, and it was obviously impossible to give to any of the young dancers roles in which she was shining. In any case, they were not yet ready. The ease of her position, the lack of any cause for apprehension that it might be menaced, would not have benefited Markova in the long run. With considerable foresight she decided to leave. The general opinion was that her absence would kill the Sadler's Wells Ballet, and there were talks of engaging another *ballerina*. Wisely this was not done. It would have strangled the enterprise.

Then Ninette de Valois revealed herself, within a few weeks, not only as a choreographer—after *The Rake's Progress* we were beginning to realise her strength—but as an animator, organiser, teacher. The company suddenly came into being, from one week to another, almost dramatically. The outsider could have no perception of the intensive preparation that had

<sup>1</sup> In case people still do not know the way, unforgivable today, a 19 or 38 bus from Hyde Park Corner stops at the door.

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been going on. The opportunity arose and the company was ready; young, a trifle raw, but a genuine personality, where before it had been a group of schoolgirls and boys. The seasons that followed this birth of the company, for the company was born the very moment it could rely on the dancers it had itself formed, proved a striking testimony to the leadership of de Valois. Progress was normal, that was the keynote of the work. If a dancer showed promise she developed gradually, not shining one week and a total eclipse the next. The erratic brilliance of the young Russians had made us forget the meaning of normal progress.

De Valois has discovered and developed an altogether extraordinary amount of talent. I do not believe that it is the result of flair, so much as knowledge. She has the ability to see what the result must be, if such and such a course of conduct is followed in the case of such and such a dancer. She is not misled by early success or failure; she has her own very positive ideas about talent that are frequently in open contradiction to those around her, and time and time again she has been right, right because she knows and not by intuition. She does not wait for the talent to declare itself, but waits for the right moment and then openly intervenes. The most extraordinary development has been the progress from the rather dry pedagogue to the truly creative teacher, a thing difficult to account for, unless the dry pedagogue never existed save in the minds of the onlookers. Yet pupils of pre-Wells days have confirmed it. Perhaps close contact with the fine musical mind of Constant Lambert has helped her to set in order her own musical knowledge and to see beyond the actual construction.

De Valois' knowledge as a teacher does not stop at a very thorough understanding of classicism, or of music. She has both a knowledge of anatomy and an eye for line that enable her to diagnose and treat the slightest anatomical abnormality, a gift which has enabled her to develop much talent that would otherwise have been irretrievably lost.

I have mentioned de Valois' understanding of classicism, without which it would be impossible to be the leader of an Academy. De Valois, the rebel, not only had no such understanding but obviously very little sympathy for pure classicism. It is interesting to speculate when such a change came about. It seems reasonable to ascribe it to the influence of having a close

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contact with such a dancer as Alicia Markova, for whom *Giselle*, *Casse-Noisette*, and the *Swan Lake* were revived. Previously to that, de Valois' classical knowledge must have been confined to the rather sterile atmosphere of the classroom, a sound knowledge of the mechanics, since she was a prominent pupil of Cecchetti, but without an opportunity for artistic perception. During her period with Diaghileff, shortly after the sensational failure of *The Sleeping Princess*, the classics only existed in the one-act abbreviation, *Aurora's Wedding*, and classicism was at a low ebb. When Sergueeff revived these great works from his system of notation, the producer in de Valois must have played a large part in bringing them to life.

I have said that de Valois, like all pioneers and leaders of an artistic movement, has a one-track mind; it is also, in another sense, a large mind. The success of her own works is not her main preoccupation. She sees them almost impersonally, as one part of her main task. Never before in the history of repertory ballet have there been two resident choreographers working in close harmony. The case is still more difficult to conceive when one of them is a director of the company. De Valois has given to Frederick Ashton the most extraordinary support, whether she sees eye to eye with him or not. She has never denied to him the right of independent creation or even attempted to influence his productions. After a long experience of ballet, I marvel at the possibility of such a thing. That clear perception has meant that the Wells has been able to enlarge its scope in half the ordinary time.

De Valois is a thinker, a methodical worker in the great tradition of the *maitres de ballet* of the past. She has outlined her ideas in a work of great value, *Invitation to the Dance*. It is vigorous, stimulating, and very revealing of her personality. The fighter and the rebel still exist alongside of the successful leader of an Academy. It is both intolerant and infinitely understanding. It shows an exuberant temperament that can curb itself only to self-discipline, and de Valois' whole progress has been the steady acquiring of that discipline. She has made her rebel's nature richly creative. She overworks the entire time, but her work is planned and productive.

She is today the outstanding figure in the world of ballet; her accomplishment as a leader greater than anyone else's and certainly less disputed.

Her musical knowledge, her ability to express herself on paper, her choreography, pedagogy, and direction of a theatre bring one back to the heroic days, stressing once again the crying need for a higher education in dancing.

The scheme for the Vic-Wells Ballet school, which aims at the creation of a veritable conservatoire of ballet and the arts that compose it, may meet this need, if it can find a Mæcenas. So many are willing to contribute large funds to present works of art, sometimes of doubtful attribution, to the nation; so many donate large sums for the excellent cause of providing playing-fields that there is surely hope. The Vic-Wells scheme aims at the creation of living works of art, works that can give constant employment to many, and that can provide mental recreation at a small cost to countless thousands to whom ballet will give solace. *Lilian Baylis created a theatre that is more truly national than any State institution, since it was born out of the sixpences of the masses.*

### (III) MARIE RAMBERT

When the history of English Ballet, so recently born, comes to be written, the name of Marie Rambert will have an especially prominent position, for she it was who, pre-Camargo, pre-Wells, showed that the English girl had something to express as a dancer and was not merely fit for relegation to the back row of a Russian *corps de ballet*. It is not the Russians, by the way, who believed in the inferiority of the English girls, but the great British public itself. Sokolova, Markova, Dolin, proved nothing; they were magnificent freaks; besides, they were very heavily disguised, and not everybody knew the ghastly truth about their passports. Diaghileff himself believed in the English, marvelled at their aptitude, and said that one day they would have a ballet of their own.

Marie Rambert was the first to present a whole group of young *solistes* under their own, or at any rate, British, stage names. They were interesting, these youngsters, and their youth itself was an extraordinary novelty. We had yet to meet de Basil and his babies. Providence was kind to English Ballet, allowing it four years between the last Diaghileff Season, Covent Garden, 1929, and the first de Basil Season, Alhambra, 1933, in which to be born and to grow strong enough to continue life.

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Marie Rambert came comparatively late to ballet, having specialised in the Dalcroze movement, and it was as an expert teacher of eurhythms that she made her first contact with Russian Ballet. Whatever influence she may have had over the Russians, they completely won her over to ballet and she became an ardent pupil of Cecchetti.

The fact that she started late and did not have much opportunity to practise her art has had an enormous bearing on her personality and has given her the burning desire to continue dancing vicariously. Marie Rambert is not a choreographer, and not a teacher in the ordinary sense of the word, but a frustrated dancer who makes others dance in her place. For this reason her influence has been genuinely creative.

After a season of public performances at which Karsavina consented to appear with her young prodigies, Marie Rambert started the Ballet Club, an old parish hall rebuilt and embellished by her husband, Ashley Dukes, into an elegant *bonbonnière* of a theatre. This was the first permanent home of ballet in England; a self-contained unit, a theatre with a company and a school of its own. There Frederick Ashton did his first important work, William Chappell discovered his gifts as a designer, Harold Turner danced *Le Spectre de la Rose* well enough for Karsavina to pick him as partner, and Pearl Argyle, Maude Lloyd, Prudence Hyman, Andrée Howard, Diana Gould, and others began to interest a limited but artistically influential public. The coming of the Russians did not kill it, though it removed some of the company, among them Vera Nelidova (née Betty Cuff) and Lisa Serova (née Elizabeth Ruxton), who have been increasingly successful. The Ballet Club was one of the mainstays of the Camargo Society; in fact, together with Ninette de Valois, it was the Society, each one having a share in the indispensable Markova, who danced everywhere in those days, appearing for five minutes in a cinema for a substantial sum, dancing *Swan Lake* for love. The public has a strange sense of values at times.

The size of the Ballet Club stage has had a marked effect on Marie Rambert's work. It has denied her the culmination of her effort and its development to full maturity; also it has robbed her of much credit that is her due. Its advantages, and they exist, I will talk of later. The time must come when the dancer and more especially the choreographer grows cramped, physically and mentally. He requires the inspiration of an

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orchestra, a large stage, a big company, large audiences. If he does not feel this, there is something seriously wrong in his development. In the old days the goal was the Russian Ballet; today, it is Sadler's Wells, and Marie Rambert has seen a number of her finest "discoveries" express themselves most fully as truly mature personalities at Sadler's Wells: Argyle, Ashton, Turner, Chappell. She has had the uphill work of years, without the reward of seeing it finally coming to flower on her own stage.

Marie Rambert has immense flair for talent, and a nervous, vital enthusiasm. It seems to me that her *forte* has been in developing the very young whom she can guide artistically, and that her personality may prove too powerful for the artist who has passed the apprenticeship stage; resulting either in a conflict or in the submission of the artist, a bad thing, even when he is wrong, and Marie Rambert is an acute analytical critic when her enthusiasm is held in check.

Where Marie Rambert has excelled is in seeing beyond the teaching of technique, in drawing out creative gifts. She is no choreographer, yet she taught Ashton, Anthony Tudor, and Andrée Howard to be choreographers; she made Chappell design. She has shown that a dancing school must be something more than a physical-training ground: it must be a cultural centre. Her gifts of intelligence, culture, and wit have been of inestimable service to her pupils.

The advantages of the small stage are that experiment becomes economically possible. No one with a large theatre and an orchestra to pay can afford to take any risks. Russian Ballet, today dependent on its own resources, has been relying for the most part on the choreographers developed by Diaghileff. Sadler's Wells is now too big a concern to risk a failure, but Marie Rambert can and must take risks. Temperamentally such a function suits her well, and she has the necessary flair to make it worth while. It is a significant fact, of which one might easily lose sight today, that from the first her experiments on that small stage were taken seriously by everyone and were never considered as pupil shows. She could have received no more genuine praise than that. Once the "discoveries" are assets they will leave her, they may not be grateful to her—"discoveries" so seldom are—but she will have had the satisfaction of the work itself.

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Another field in which Marie Rambert has taken the lead in the formation of a new branch of the art of ballet, the miniature or chamber ballet, and she has already sponsored some charming productions of that kind, the work of one of her original company, Andrée Howard, both designer and choreographer, who is able to make a virtue of the small stage and who in *Death and the Maiden* and *Croquis de Mercure*, has created works of real skill and beauty.

Marie Rambert, more than anyone today, has set out with deliberation to find choreographic talent. She sees it latent in every pupil, she is boisterously optimistic, able to make others believe, including the would-be choreographer himself. And strangely enough, the talent often is there in sufficient quantity to reward her for her flair and courage.

### (IV) FREDERICK ASHTON

Whenever a man accomplishes anything unusual, generally in the realm of crime, it is customary for the press to comment on the fact that he is a public-school boy. Frederick Ashton, after passing his youth in South America, was educated at a public school, a startling beginning to a successful career in ballet.

He started dancing by taking a lesson a week with Massine and then joined Ida Rubinstein's company, coming under the influence of Nijinska. Those expensive ventures of Ida Rubenstein, eight months of rehearsal for a week of work, have proved of infinite importance in the history of contemporary ballet, giving us Lichine, Shabalevsky, Verchinina, Morosova, and other a fact that should be placed to her credit.

Ashton must be considered a pupil of Marie Rambert, who gave him discipline, opportunity, guidance, and then a platform. He made his choreographic débüt in a revue at the Lyric, Hammersmith, with a small work, *The Tragedy of Fashion*. It was with the *Capriol Suite* and *Leda* that he showed marked ability. Pavlova greatly admired the former when it was shown by the Camargo Society, and came to a studio rehearsal of the latter. She was about to engage Ashton when she died so tragically.

It will be seen that Ashton enjoyed immediate recognition and that his débüt was marked by an almost total lack of struggle. There was, however, a hard struggle to learn dancing

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at all, with an unhappy period in the city during which his precious time seemed to be slipping away. In this struggle Ashton revealed determination and character that were never missing even when he seemed to be enjoying a too great early success. He created each work with altogether extraordinary ease. The result was always highly effective theatrically, elegant with an original angle, but somewhat derivative technically first-class entertainment, but lacking in body. First for the Ballet Club, then for the Camargo Society, he produced a succession of works, many of which have survived, all of which met with success. His first large-scale production was *Pomona*. I launched the Camargo Society. It was definitely flippant, stylised Olympian, in a late Diaghileff vein, but it revealed the gift of being able to present his dancers to their very greatest advantage. This he followed up with *Façade*,<sup>1</sup> a still lighter work, but one that showed originality.

Ashton was from the first the very opposite of the other English choreographer, Ninette de Valois. She had a great deal to express and found difficulty in doing so; he had very little to say, but did so with extraordinary charm. She drew on her knowledge, he on his intuition. For a considerable period it looked as if he would go on eternally showing promise, spoilt by his own gifts. Everything he did was maddeningly charming and chic. Perhaps because he was criticising himself at the time, he was bitterly resentful of criticism.

In America he met with great success from a small clique for his work in the Gertrude Stein-Virgil Thompson Opera, *Four Saints in Three Acts*. This American experience had a marked effect on his character. The enthusiastic praise of a clique of aesthetes, couched in the most extraordinary jargon, tickled his sense of humour. It was success of a type he no longer enjoyed. It gave him an entirely new set of values.

There is also no doubt that for a very long time he suffered from an inferiority complex, thinking of his own work in terms of the Russian Ballet and consequently rather despising popular success. This sense of inferiority completely vanished when he joined the flourishing Wells Ballet, and not only enjoyed the advantages of a permanent company, but of the whole atmosphere of creation. It gave him something in which he could believe, and also threw him into close contact with Constant Lambert.

<sup>1</sup> See page 141.

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Instead of having to rely upon scraps of music hastily thrown together, he could now collaborate with a man who understood the relationship between ballet and music more clearly than



anyone else. Where before intuition had made his success, he could now call on knowledge to help him out. He could express far deeper emotions because he felt them. He had become a conscious artist. Many of his works were still light, *Les Ren-*

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*deztous*,<sup>1</sup> for instance, but they formed a vivid contrast to what had gone before. For the first time he was really grappling with his material, guiding it instead of making a surface effect. There was no need for strong external influences. He could listen to the music directly.

In *Nocturne* he showed genuine compassion; in *Apparitions* vivid imagination disciplined by strong musical suggestion; in *Le Baiser de la Fée* a still further musical comprehension, his choreography bearing the same relationship to orthodox classicism as Stravinsky's music did to Tchaikovsky, upon which it was based. Finally, in *Horoscope*,<sup>2</sup> for the first time he handled his *corps de ballet* with maximum effect, showing himself a master of choreography.

This gain of conscious artistry has in no way lessened the feeling of spontaneity that he has always shown and that is one of his greatest qualities. *The Wedding Bouquet* appears to be a light-hearted frolic; only with close study does one see that the effects are obtained legitimately, out of movement, and that the dancing itself is splendidly sound.

I have dealt with some of Ashton's later creations in another chapter.

<sup>1</sup> See page 143.

<sup>2</sup> See page 144.

## CHAPTER SIX

### APPRECIATION: STUDIES OF BALLETTS IN THE CONTEMPORARY REPERTOIRES

*(A practical application of Chapter Three)*

IN this chapter I am going to comment on a series of ballets that are in the regular repertoires of companies performing in England, studying them in the light of the background that forms the subject of the third chapter. I shall try to avoid the technique of the guide book that marks special beauties with one or more asterisks. I have no wish to foist my own tastes too obviously on the reader; my aim is to give him sufficient data to form a considered opinion of his own, to counterbalance, perhaps, the often uncritical emotions aroused by watching a very favourite performer who can do no wrong.

I will deal with the history, the conception, the music, choreography, and drama. The personalities who composed them are already known to us.

#### (I) GISELLE

*Romantic survival*

*Giselle*, first presented in 1841, is the oldest ballet in the current repertoire, and has been given without interruption ever since its creation. Yet the history of its creation bears no hint that it was to be an enduring work.

Théophile Gautier, in reviewing Heine's *De l'Allemagne*, found himself fascinated by the legend of the *wilis*—maidens who have died before their wedding day and who come out of their graves at night in bridal dress to dance until dawn. Should any man be caught in the wood when the *wilis* are dancing, he is doomed to dance on and on until he drops dead from exhaustion.

From Heine's description of the legend, Gautier saw an admirable theme for ballet, a romantic theme of beautiful women, white gauze, and German moonlight. Together with an experienced opera librettist, V. de Saint-Georges, he turned the theme into a story. The music by Adolphe Adam was written within a week, and the choreography devised as rapidly.

If we ask ourselves why this particular ballet has survived out



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of the countless works that enjoyed success, we shall not only be able to assess its particular value, but to learn something of ballet in general. The music does not account for the survival, though it is in every respect superior to the ballet music of its period. The most that one can say is that it has not prevented survival. It has today all the quaint charm of the romantic colour-print that one picks up for a few centimes on the Paris quay-side. The ballet as a whole also has its quaint moments, but it is very much more than a museum piece. It is a moving, living work. *Giselle* survives because it is the purest expression of its period and because its story makes it the greatest of all tests for the *ballerina*. Every actress has the ambition at some time in her career to undertake the role of Marguerite Gautier in *La Dame aux Camélias*; every *ballerina* sees herself as *Giselle*. The parallel is exact in every particular. The old play is quaint, its mechanism is obvious, but it lives because it is magnificent theatre, and the chance it gives to the actress now delights Garbo or Yvonne Printemps as it did Sarah Bernhardt or Duse. The dancer in *Giselle* must have a very strong technical equipment, and in addition to that a great range of expression. She starts as a carefree village girl, fond of dancing and very much in love. Next we see her betrayed and driven mad, until she dies a suicide. Then, in the following act, she is a spirit who must impress upon us the fact that she is lightness itself and so make a vivid contrast with the red-cheeked villager of the first act. This acting raises innumerable difficulties. The scene of madness cannot be naturalistic or it would be altogether out of the picture. It must be lyrical and fit perfectly within the classical convention. The latitude allowed the actress is minute, every gesture is circumscribed. To succeed in *Giselle* means a triumph of personality, a unique example of true personality that is technically disciplined.

Another reason for its survival lies in the fact that it is more perfectly balanced than the other romantic ballets. The male role exists in fact, and is not merely inserted for purely technical reasons. Nijinsky made a name in this ballet, Lifar and Helpmann have both proved the dramatic possibilities of the part. *Giselle* is not merely an excuse for dancing, but lives on account of the drama that it expresses. Of all the romantic ballets, one can rely only upon contemporary accounts; it stands alone in fulfilling the conditions laid down by Noverre.

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Within living memory Pavlova was supreme in the role. To have seen her in nothing else is to have seen every facet of her art. She made one innovation to increase the plausibility of the scene, dancing the second act in draperies suggestive of grave clothes, instead of in the conventional ballet skirt. Unfortunately, after her the innovation has been abandoned. It is both logical and in a tradition that is older and more acceptable than that of the middle nineteenth century. After Pavlova only certain aspects of the complex role have been revealed. Olga Spessivtseva (Spessiva) has danced it with magnificent purity of line; Markova, for whom it was revived in England, gave an excellent academic rendering, especially of the second act; Margot Fonteyn, its latest interpreter, has stressed the tenderness of the character and more nearly resembles Pavlova than any other dancer I have seen in making one forget the mechanics of the *ballerina*.

To dance *Giselle* with any degree of success is to be a considerable dancer and an artist as well. The conception of the role rises above the quaint appealing music and the conventionally effective setting. The ballet lives because its central figure is a genuine character whose suffering can move one to compassion. The poetic inspiration of Heine and Gautier has shone through what has become a dead formula.

### (II) THE SWAN LAKE: AURORA'S WEDDING

#### *Classical survivals*

*The Swan Lake* was first produced in 1877. It was of considerable importance and well ahead of its time in conception, since it meant that once again the serious composer was to be concerned in the making of ballet. Admirable though it is choreographically, its survival is certainly due to the music of Tchaikovsky. The only works of the period to survive are those by Tchaikovsky: *The Swan Lake*, *Casse-Noisette*, and *The Sleeping Princess*. At the time, his music was considered too symphonic in form to be suitable for the theatre. That alone reveals to us the true state of ballet and *balletomanes*.

The original production was a failure, and it was only after the composer's death that the work succeeded, when it was 'ved in 1894, with fresh choreography by Petipa, thanks to the

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enlightened rule of I. A. Vsevolozhsky, director of the Imperial Theatres.

*The Swan Lake* presents an enormous contrast to *Giselle*. It is not so essentially romantic, though its music is truly romantic



in contrast to the tuneful tinkle of *Giselle*. It has a story of the conventional romantic type with a heroine of dual personality who has been bewitched by an evil spirit. The story, however, is of no account. It is told, like *Giselle*, by means of conven-

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tional miming, but whereas in *Giselle* the actress-dancer can convey a depth of meaning outside the mime, in *The Swan Lake* the mime remains as a rather tedious interruption of the dancing; so much so that in many versions it has been heavily curtailed, and with no loss. The essence of *The Swan Lake* is its dancing, and the role was created for the greatest virtuosa of her day, Pierrina Legnani. It was her *fouettés* that caused a sensation, and not her acting.

Today, *The Swan Lake* in its entirety survives in Russia, the home of old-fashioned ballet, and at Sadler's Wells. The version that is best known is that used by Diaghileff, a concentrated affair in one act. This, while it makes the ballet more acceptable to modern ideas, slightly distorts it, and the tendency has been more and more to attack it in the spirit of *Les Sylphides*, giving it a softness alien to Petipa and his period. This one-act abbreviation dispenses entirely with one aspect of the heroine's dual nature, the hard facet in which she dazzles the Prince by her virtuosity. It dispenses also with the conventional act of *divertissements*, where a ball or celebration is used as an excuse to introduce various dances for their own sake, intruding on the narrative. The essence of the classical ballet is a very positive narrative that is disregarded in favour of showing as many aspects of dancing as possible. Ballet classicism departs a long way from the great masters who founded the art, and is to that extent misnamed.

In *Aurora's Wedding*, the other Petipa-Tchaikovsky survival, all that remains is the series of disconnected dances. In this respect it reveals the classical principle much more clearly than *The Swan Lake*. Diaghileff took the celebration scene from the full-length *The Sleeping Princess*, and added to it many dances from *Casse-Noisette*. That alone shows us the looseness of classical construction; dance for the sake of dancing, any excuse is justified so long as the dance itself is harmonious. Princess Aurora herself has no existence as a character. At her own wedding she is merely the *ballerina assoluta*. The second most important personages in the ballet, the Blue Bird and the Princess, appear only in the last act. Their dance is one of the gems of ballet, but if it were cut out entirely, it would not in any way alter the story of *The Sleeping Princess*. Also, even considered as a dramatic entity, the dance of the Blue Bird has no significance. Fokine's Dying Swan is a drama, Petipa's Blue

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Bird and Princess are brilliant dancers. Like a large canvas by Ingres, master of the French classical school of painting, this dance charms us by its line, delights us through its composition, but leaves us emotionally cold.

It must not be imagined on this account that these dances call for nothing but an accomplished technique. They also make considerable demands on artistry and personality. Nothing can more easily be rendered vulgar than the Blue Bird or the Aurora *pas de deux*, if the dancer concentrates on the steps at the expense of the dance as a whole. Apart from technical ability, the quality to be looked for in these classical dances is an interpretation that removes them from acrobatics,<sup>1</sup> that gives them dignity and purity. If the ballet has no entity of plot or structure, each dance apart has a structural entity, and the great classical dancer is the one who realises that conception.

### (III) LES SYLPHIDES: LE SPECTRE DE LA ROSE

#### (i) *The new romanticism*

*Les Sylphides*, the best known and the most constantly danced of all ballets, is an expression of the reaction in Fokine against the artificialities of classicism. It does not react against classical technique but against the paraphernalia that surround it. It is a return to romanticism, to the true spirit of romanticism and not to its period expression. The period expression of romanticism dates; its works, with the exception of *Giselle*, are dead; but the romantic spirit itself survives at every period and in every art.

*Les Sylphides* as first conceived by Fokine had a standard romantic setting, the coming to life of images in the mind of the fevered composer. Later, in 1908, it became the suite of dances that we know today, and Diaghileff altered its original title of *Chopiniana* to that of *Les Sylphides* for its presentation during his first Western European season, Paris, 1909.

The title, suggested by Taglioni's famous ballet *La Sylphide*, is particularly apt, for in *Les Sylphides* is preserved all that was best in *le ballet blanc*. Though the work is composed of various disconnected dances (*Chopin Nocturne*, opus 32, No. 2; *Valse*, opus 70, No. 1; *Mazurka*, opus 33, No. 3; *Mazurka*, opus 67, No. 3; *Prelude*, opus 28, No. 7, also used as the overture; *Valse*, opus 64, No. 2; and *Valse*, opus 18, No. 1), it is not a *divertissement*.

<sup>1</sup> See page 36.



*Les Sylphides*

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ment. It has an absolute unity of atmosphere. The use of the *corps de ballet*, making them into expressive artists instead of a mechanical background, not only connects the whole, but distinguishes the new romantic ballet from the classical and romantic works of the past.

*The Swan Lake* calls in the first place for the interpretation of a dance; *Les Sylphides* demands more: it demands the interpretation of music. Though it has no direct dramatic narrative, through this work the ghost of Noverre is at last appeased. Logic enters once more into ballet; music, atmosphere, movement, and costume are gloriously reunited.

### (ii) *Le Spectre de la Rose*

In this small work the shade of Théophile Gautier revisits the scene of his triumphs, and with it he enjoys a posthumous success. So perfectly conceived is it, so delicate, making such demands on its interpreters, that today, though constantly given, it scarcely exists. It demands a dancer of exceptional virtuosity who will subordinate himself to the role. The leap out of the window that the audience have concentrated upon and will insensitively applaud has killed the ballet. Fokine invoked romanticism, the audience has insisted upon classicism, and has been satisfied.

This ballet to Weber's *Invitation à la Valse*, directly inspired by a poem of Gautier's, tells the story of a young girl returning from her first ball. She drowses, and the spirit of the red rose that she has been given comes to life and dances with her and then disappears. It is an experience that happens but once in a lifetime. She awakes disillusioned. The maiden has become a woman. This ballet, properly understood, is the most perfect theatrical expression of adolescence. Its misunderstanding is due to the fact that while dramatically the leading role is the woman's, from the dancing point of view the lead is the man's. Today, neither dancers nor audience realise that fact. The man, the spectre of the rose, is dramatically on the second plane, a projection of the woman's dream. Only if this is made clear by the dancers does the ballet survive. The force of the woman's acting must eclipse the brilliance of the man's dancing, and the role is an exceptionally quiet one that calls for no obvious acting, but that must carry with it both conviction and sincerity. How-

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ever brilliantly Nijinsky danced, the triumph was Karsavina's and she succeeded in recapturing it on every occasion, even when she danced with admittedly inferior partners. In difficulty the role is equalled only by that of *Giselle*. It calls for less sustained effort and for less technique, but for a far more subtle understanding of dramatic values. Since Karsavina, no dancer has deliberately succeeded; many *ballerinas* have made of it a dismal failure. The more accomplished the dancer, the worse the failure. Only certain immature dancers have instinctively captured something of the mood. If the audience would show more understanding and not applaud the leap in the middle of the girl's sad awakening, the ballet would have a greater chance of survival.

## (IV) CARNAVAL

### *Porcelain mischief; another aspect of the new romanticism*

Fokine's *Carnaval* to Schumann's music of the same name was composed hastily in 1910 for a charity entertainment, and was taken into the Diaghileff repertoire the following year.

It is slight, subtle, witty, tender, and pathetic; a quickly changing pattern of moods. Every dancer must be the interpreter of a carefully conceived role, in which period style plays its part. Delicate as porcelain, today it has "come to pieces in me 'and,'" and though it has been stuck together again, the rivets are painfully obvious. Ballet of this type can be preserved only when there is leisure to educate the dancers. For that reason the version given at Sadler's Wells, though far from satisfactory, since it has not had the advantages of direct contact with Fokine, is the most consistent to be seen today. The interpretation of *Carnaval* calls for infinite attention to detail. The fault of most productions is that the roles tend to become blurred and assume one another's characteristics. It would be difficult to imagine anything farther from dancing for the sake of dancing. Every little movement is an expression of character: Pierrot, lumbering and dejected, sentimental and credulous; Columbine and Harlequin playing the same game at the expense of the other characters, carefree and heartless, exploiting their brilliance and charm; Chiarina, also a flirt, more sentimental, deceiving herself at times; Pantalon, vain and pompous, the clubman "'pon my 1"; Papillon, flitting brilliantly through to mock at Pierrot.

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Today, the Philistines who intrude upon the scene, and make themselves the butt of all the characters, have very little meaning. We know "highbrows" and "lowbrows," but both are drab, both sneer at the romantic, and would be the butt of Fokine's enchanted and enchanting characters. Biedermeyer Germany is dead for ever—William killed it before Hitler—and *Carnaval* is as much the essence of Biedermeyer as *Giselle* is the essence of the more robust romanticism of its period. Bakst's delicate setting is an indispensable part of the ballet. Two attempts to use a new setting totally destroyed the work. The very fact that they should have been attempted showed a lack of understanding. *Carnaval* can only be understood by dancers and audience if it is seen as the definite expression of a period. Perhaps it will never really come to life again.

### (V) SCHEHERAZADE: THAMAR *Exotics*

Romanticism has always been interested in the exotic, and such ballets as *Revolt in the Harem* enjoyed a tremendous popularity. The new romanticism also turned to the exotic, and the flaming macaw-wing colours of Léon Bakst revolutionised decorative art.

There is nothing more dangerous dramatically than the exotic, which all too easily becomes ludicrous, like the Oriental department of a large emporium, and loses the essential plausibility. I have already discussed the genesis of *Scheherazade*. To many it will seem slightly old-fashioned, in the sense that it does not create the overwhelming impression it once did; but no one can find it comical, as they did *Cleopatra* when it was revived. The orgy is convincing. Cecil de Mille has yet to equal it, in spite of the lavish nature of his entertainments.

*Scheherazade* is brilliantly constructed round Rimsky-Korsakov's symphonic poem. Its blood-curdling narrative is well told, its characters wonderfully indicated. We know the imperious, sensual, vicious Zobeide, the kindly, weak, credulous Shah, his sceptical brother, as well as if they had spoken three acts of dialogue. They are "round" characters. How expressive the movement of the Shah's brother in kicking the body of the dead slave, as if to say, "You are about to forgive her and she gave herself to this." How telling the final scene between

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Zobeide and the Shah, an admirable example of what can be narrated through mime when it is handled by a master. The eunuch alone is "flat," a conventional comedy figure. He only accentuates the reality of the others. Finally, there is the study of the slave himself, the completely physical man, whom only ballet could exploit to the full. But characterisation alone would make this into a pantomime. It has far more than narrative value. There is a richness of design that is interesting and logical in itself, movement that is exciting in itself apart from what it tells us. The slave's leap on to the cushion is an exciting athletic feat, as well as a demonstration of character. And Bakst's colours are a part of the music and the story. It is impossible to remove any element from this ballet without causing the collapse of the whole. The type of romanticism of *Scheherazade* is far removed from us today, but *Scheherazade* remains completely convincing, a vivid lesson in ballet composition.

*Cleopatra* has failed to survive. Its story is worth that of *Scheherazade*, some of its dances are exceedingly powerful, and Bakst's décor and costumes are good. It has failed because the music is a weak collection of hackneyed tunes, carrying no conviction. What should be pathetic has become comical, and we await in vain the entrance of Nervo and Knox to complete the fun.

*Thamar*, exotic sequel to *Scheherazade*, still survives. Balakirev's music is superior to Rimsky-Korsakov's, but not as ballet music. It lacks the directness. It tells the story in its own way, more completely. It is contemplative music rather than action music. *Thamar* is the study of one woman, and it lives only if that woman is a consummate actress. Its dances are, in a sense, a very conventional stage version of Caucasian folk-dances. There are none of the rich creations of *Scheherazade*. *Thamar* is never ridiculous, but it is only just alive.

### (VI) THE POLOVTSIAN DANCES FROM PRINCE IGOR

#### *The restoration of the male dancer*

This ballet, the Polovtsian Dances from Borodin's opera, *Prince Igor*, more than anything secured the triumph of Diaghileff's Russian Ballet in Western Europe. An analysis of the

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first Paris press, 1909, clearly shows that the focal point was this essentially virile ballet.

When the Russian Ballet first came to Paris, its triumph was by no means assured. Ballet still survived at the Opéra, and Paris had seen many brilliant *ballerinas*. The male dancer no longer existed as an artist. The romantic credo and the outstanding success of Taglioni had reduced him to a secondary role. Romanticism in Russia had never gone to such extremes. Through the serfs, ballet had kept touch with reality. Ballet was not the plaything of poets. It had a solid contact with the people. Of the two brothers Petipa, Lucien remained in France and earned praise because he never obtruded himself, Marius went to Russia and became the Tsar of ballet.

Ballet, as we have shown, has as one of its ingredients *the orchestration of dancing*. Without the male dancer that orchestration is impossible. Male movement is the complement of female movement. When an all-male ballet performed in London it defeated its own object: it did not reveal male movement. Without any contrast the result was meaningless and monotonous. The weaker males were almost forced into the position of female impersonators. The result is equally bad in an all-woman ballet. Not only is the physical balance upset, but the dramatic as well, even when there is no concrete narrative. The *pas de deux* is more than a physical contrast: it is a love duet. There is this feeling of courtship in every *adagio*, even if it is as coldly classical as in *The Blue Bird* or as sublimated as in *Les Sylphides*.

For this very reason it may be taken as axiomatic that *the effeminate male dancer is a bad dancer*. There are altogether too many effeminate dancers in ballet. Effeminacy has become a bad tradition during the last twenty years, and is today causing untold damage, turning the virile athletic boy away from an art in which he could excel. Perhaps because dancing and the spirit of the old school tie, "play the game, you cads," seem so far removed, English male dancers are particularly effeminate, a very serious danger. Ballet originated with men, and is in no way incompatible with virility. Grace must not be confused with effeminacy: Carpentier was one of the most graceful creatures I have ever seen.

*Prince Igor* suddenly convinced Western Europe of the existence of the male dancer. His position in character ballet was

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immediately clear, but a misunderstanding still persists as to his role in classical or romantic ballet. A romantic costume does not make a man effeminate. The most swashbuckling males wore what we would now term romantic costumes. Whatever his costume, the role of the male in ballet is that of a lover, and his physical attributes must be those of the star athlete. An understanding of this is essential. Without it ballet is in grave danger.

### (VII) PETROUCHKA

#### *The perfect dance drama*

I have already written at some length of the origin of *Petrouchka*. It is indeed difficult not to quote it at all times as the perfect expression of the dance drama, rich in theme and colour, in character and pattern. It is the most truly Russian of all Russian ballets, its music and dancing inspired by the soil.

Its construction is interesting: a background of walkers-on who move and act but do not dance and who exist as individuals; next, the nurses, the coachmen, and the other characters who are also a part of the crowd, but who perform set national dances; and in the foreground the actors in the drama: Petrouchka, the Moor, the *Ballerina*, and the Charlutan. The audience is introduced to the characters first through the eyes of the spectators, then it is privileged to witness the drama as it develops behind the curtains of the booth, then once again it forms a part of the crowd to see the resulting murder, straying behind to watch the final triumph of Petrouchka. In this way the story is told from two angles and in complete detail. The whole thing is so simple that there is no need to refer to the programme for guidance, yet much more is expressed in the action than could ever be expressed in words. The characters are vividly contrasted: the Dancer, a heartless coquette; the Moor, a savage, strong and very physical, terrified of the unknown; Petrouchka, striving to express himself, in love with beauty, sawdust finding a soul. The jostling, merry crowd of the first scene only accentuates the claustrophobia of poor Petrouchka in the second scene: one of the most pathetic to be seen on the stage. Although there are a number of seemingly independent scenes, not one is there merely as an embellishment. They are necessary to situate and to underline the tragedy. *Petrouchka*



is told with extraordinary economy. *Le Coq d'Or*, equally Russian in theme, is verbose in parts, much of it is frankly spectacles. *The Firebird* is a fairy-tale far more poetically expressed, in every way a superior work, but *Petrouchka* stands alone. It is the *Hamlet* of ballet.

## (VIII) L'EPREUVE D'AMOUR

*A reminder*

*L'Epreuve d'Amour*, or *Chung Yang and the Mandarin*, was produced by Fokine in 1936. I quote from the theatre programme: "When Leopold II came to the throne in 1790, a great change took place in the music favoured by the Vienna Court, and therefore in Mozart's professional duties. In the early months of 1791 he had to provide over forty dances—Minuets and so on—for the Court balls. For the carnival he provided an entertainment of the pseudo-Chinese type in vogue, for which he composed original music. This was subsequently lost, and has only recently come to light at Graz."

In its modern history a ballet using the original score was devised for René Blum by Fokine and Derain, who did the décors.

This simple work was misunderstood by many, chiefly among *balletomanes*, who were deceived by its simplicity and directness into thinking it childish, and who dismissed it as such. Had they examined it more deeply, they would have found in it a valuable lesson and a sharp reminder of the path that ballet must take, a reminder from the father of modern ballet. Since he left Diaghileff, Fokine has done no work more perfect.

The story is simple and easily rendered in pantomime. A mandarin's daughter loves a poor man. The mandarin is ambitious, and when a foreign ambassador comes, bearing lavish gifts, decides to give his daughter to him. The poor lover disguises himself as a dragon and terrifies the foreigner, while his friends, disguised as robbers, bind him and his attendants and remove the jewels. The mandarin, seeing that the foreigner has no more wealth, refuses the hand of his daughter. The treasure is then returned, but it is too late, and the mandarin is compelled to let his daughter marry the poor suitor.

The ballet opens and closes on a charming note, the mandarin



L'Espresso di domenica

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in contemplation disturbed by the gambols of monkeys and the fluttering of a butterfly.

The style of the work is perfect. Fokine has not intended to depict China, but a *chinoiserie*, China seen through Occidental eyes, a fashion much in vogue in rococo times, as evidenced in porcelain, furniture, and wall decoration. He has set out to tell the simple story with directness of narrative and a characterisation that is a model of clarity, that is implicit in the particular piece of music, and that is not conventional.

One reaction, a false one, was to say: "This is not the best Mozart." Whether this is true or not is quite beside the point. We are not judging the music by concert-hall standards. It serves its purpose admirably, and reveals better than anything else the inadequacy of much considerably better music used unsuitably. The collaboration between Derain and Fokine is such as we have rarely seen in recent times, and Derain's colour scheme, daring and yet harmonious, is great theatre and great decoration.

This ballet is not academic, but it is a school piece in the best sense of the word.

These Fokine ballets are the standard works of the repertoire. It is necessary to know them thoroughly before understanding ballet. A proportion of them must have been studied by every serious dancer, and those who have not interpreted their leading roles cannot be called *ballerinas*. The fact that, with the exception of *L'Epreuve d'Amour*, they were composed before the War does not mean that ballet has produced nothing since. What it does mean is that the dancer of today and the public of today have been brought up on them, that their continued and uninterrupted popularity testifies to their merit, and that they are performed by more than one company. They satisfy certain essential conditions so that, no matter how ballet develops, they will not lose their interest. Survival is an infallible proof of merit. Nothing could appear more old-fashioned today than certain of the ballets of the last Diaghileff period. They were amusing novelties, but bad works of art. The really fine work, unless lost by accident, expresses a constant truth.

I am going to comment on some of the more recent ballets that have points of special interest and that are to be seen at every year.

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The next group of ballets—they can also be called standard works—are selected from the great number created by Massine.

### (IX) THE THREE-CORNERED HAT

*And the “translation” of raw material*

Spain, one of the few countries open to the Russian Ballet during the War, had a marked influence on Massine, since most of his formative period had been passed there. He had from the first produced various small works in the Spanish manner. Diaghileff had long been an admirer of Spanish dancing, and was in close touch with Picasso and Manuel da Falla. The result of all this was inevitably a Spanish ballet. Massine learnt the technique of the dance from a Seville gipsy, Felix by name. It has been said that this Felix, who subsequently went insane, was ill-used and actually composed the ballet. To anyone who has followed the argument of this book such a supposition is clearly absurd. Felix supplied the basic material, but he could be no partner to a Picasso or a da Falla. *The Three-cornered Hat* is a highly sophisticated work, a translation of Spanish folk-dancing into terms of the theatre. It could have been created only by an experienced choreographer. Massine used Felix's material; just as in other ballets he used the material of ballet classicism or of the museum.

This question of “translation” is all-important. Picasso did not copy traditional Spanish costume, he “translated” it for the stage; da Falla “translated” folk-music. The groundwork of *Petrouchka* is likewise a “translation” of Russian folk art. It could not have been created by a dancing coachman. Diaghileff, who more than anyone possessed both the instinct and the understanding of the theatre, always maintained that nothing is less convincing than the real thing brought on to the stage. A case in point was the ballet *Children's Tales*. A real horse brought on to the stage where everything else was stylised looked fantastic and out of place. It was necessary to “translate” the horse and to substitute a wooden one, which immediately fitted into the scheme. I have myself never seen anything more ridiculous than an elephant introduced on to the stage in an American picture-house version of *Scheherazade*. It made everything else look unreal. There are a number of Spanish

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dancers of exceptional virtuosity and artistry to whom the farucca in *The Three-cornered Hat* would be child's-play, but they could never make the impression of the Russian ballet dancer Massine. They might not even appear so Spanish. Their artistry is spontaneous and intuitive, his entirely conscious.

The failure of *Gaieté Parisienne* is due to a lack of this very "translation" in which Massine usually excels.

### (X) LA BOUTIQUE FANTASQUE

*And the creation of character*

*La Boutique Fantasque*, first presented in 1919, was planned in Italy during the War. Diaghileff decided to make a ballet out of certain pieces that Rossini had composed in his old age for the amusement of his guests. André Derain was chosen for the décor and costumes, and immediately proved himself a theatrical designer of the front rank.

The subject of toys coming to life at night is an old and obvious one for ballet. Pavlova had long made *The Fairy Doll* popular, but the music was too poor and the choreography too mechanical for it to have any existence as a work of art without her.

Massine brought an entirely fresh point of view to his choreography. He gave his toys character, avoiding the pitfalls of purely mechanical movement. From the very moment that we see them first of all as toys in the shop they have in them the possibility of independent life. The thing is so plausible that when it happens we are both charmed and convinced. The old shopkeeper is at first glance a ballet-type comic, but when he develops in his by-play with the young assistant, a typical Italian street urchin, we soon realise that he is a personality. The same with the Englishman and the Russian and their families. Observe how the Russian father counts and pays out the money. Even the maiden aunt is drawn in full. This ballet lives because it tells a familiar story in an unfamiliar way. We can make a not too far-fetched comparison with a novel by Dickens, a familiar theme enriched by the creation of a whole gallery of characters in the middle of which there is a delightfully sentimental episode.

The richness of the choreography is astonishing. Massine translated "movement from Italy, Russia, France, from

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the streets, from toys and paintings. There is never a moment of monotony, and music and décor are of a piece. The famous can-can requires a pure classical dancer to interpret it and once again reveals the infinite variety of ends to which the classical system is a means.

### (XI) LE BEAU DANUBE<sup>1</sup>

#### *Massine's tour de force*

This ballet was devised by Massine immediately after his choreography for *Le Sacre du Printemps*, a complex work of incredible difficulty. It came to him easily, almost as a necessity, and at a time when jazz and not the Viennese waltz was the order of the day.

It seems obvious to construct a ballet round the melodies of Johann Strauss. It is so obvious that many have tried it, and failed. This music is almost a too complete expression of the dance itself. In *La Boutique Fantasque* the theme was obvious; here the music is, and once again Massine has accomplished a *tour de force* by creating a whole gallery of living people, and so telling a sentimental anecdote with remarkable style.

These characters are human and lovable. There is an interesting contrast between the two women who love the hussar: the timid young girl and the bold street dancer. The street dancer is vulgar, but once again the role calls for a pure classical dancer. The vulgarity must be ballistic, never actual. One of the most remarkably conceived roles is Massine's own hussar. It is wrong to conceive of a ballet in terms of an individual dancer. I must be allowed to make of this case an exception. There is a moment in the story when the hussar stands in the centre of the stage motionless, reflecting while the other characters dance round and mock at him. That lack of motion must be positive; with nearly every dancer lack of motion is a negative. Massine and Helpmann almost alone possess this particular quality. When Massine stands there on the stage he becomes the focal point; when any other dancer ceases to move he vanishes from our attention. Massine reveals this quality in two other roles. In *Le Chapeau Tricorne*, when the miller's wife is dancing and he

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the original version before crude decoration ruined the balance of the work.—A. L. H.

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is a spectator, he shows such positive concentration that enhances her dance by making the actual audience concentrate. In *La Symphonie Fantastique*, when he is watching the pasto-movement one can feel that it is a part of his own life. These are the great moments of ballet, so subtle that they cannot be rewarded by applause; but they distinguish the true art from the competent dancer.

*Le Beau Danube* is a fine enough ballet to make its effect without Massine, but without him it loses in meaning and intensity.

### (XII) JEUX D'ENFANTS

#### *And the decadent school*

This was the first ballet that Massine arranged for the de Bas company, working with a group of young and inexperienced artists, whose technique was amazing and whose enthusiasm was infectious. It is admirably designed to exploit their particular gifts.

*Jeux d'Enfants* tells very much the same story as *La Boutique Fantasque*: the coming to life of toys, but in an entirely different manner. There is no attempt at any realism. He starts from an absolutely fresh viewpoint. All the happenings on the stage are fantastic. This needs explanation, for the word fantastic is a part of the title, *La Boutique Fantasque*. There the human characters are "real" and the toys are "real" until they come to life, and even when they come to life they are recognisable as toys; the fantasy lies in the fact of their coming to life. In *Jeux d'Enfants* the little girl who is a part of the whole episode is also a creature of fantasy, and the toys have no concrete existence; they are just symbols. The entire ballet is a dream world, and the choreographer's task has been to make us believe in the reality of that dream world. On paper the scenario makes no sense at all. This is ballet the farthest removed from literature. It succeeds because the relationship of music to movement and colour makes our imagination work. Put the story into a realistic setting and the whole thing would seem rubbish. Joan Miro's surrealist scene shows that ballet is an admirable medium for surrealist art. The fault in such a ballet as *Choreartium* is that the scenery is too static and reminiscent of actuality for the

<sup>4c.</sup> In *Jeux d'Enfants* music and scenery are more closely related than in any other contemporary work.

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There is such a thing as narrative music that develops a plot; there is also music that paints various images and suggests an atmosphere, but that is never explicit. Both types of music are suitable to ballet, but only if the first is allied to a narrative and realistic décors, the second to a vague poetic idea and an imaginative setting. *Scheherazade* is an admirable example of the first, *Jeux d'Enfants* of the second. The second type might be said to belong to the "decadent" school, to borrow an analogy from poetry, where the music of words and the feelings induced by that music are the poet's aim and not the precise value of the words. An understanding of this would save many failures in ballets in which the music has not been specially commissioned.

*Cotillon*, Balanchine's ballet of about the same date, 1932, is also a notable example of the decadent school. A ball is in progress. Certain exciting things happen. We feel that they are affecting the lives of the dancers but cannot explain them. The ball continues, and finishes in a burst of gaiety, the central character turning like a top while the curtain falls. Was it an ordinary ball, or have we dreamed of the strange events? That is the first emotion we receive. The figures on the stage are utterly unreal; not the lovable, easy to describe characters of a *Boutique Fantasque*. But the creator's skill and consistency are such that we can readily believe in them.

Both these ballets were conceived by a poet, Boris Kochno, who excels in the "decadent" ballet.

### (XIII) LA SYMPHONIE FANTASTIQUE

*Five ballets in one*

*La Symphonie Fantastique* was presented at Covent Garden in 1936 after many years' planning.

Although a choreographic version of Berlioz' *Symphony*, it did not arouse the customary controversy, since the composer himself laid down a programme and foresaw the possibility of its production in theatrical form.

Nothing shows Massine's versatility and skill better than this ballet in five parts, each part of which is a distinct ballet.

The first part is the true symphonic ballet of the *Choreartium* type, though there is no abstraction. In its grouping and pattern it reaches great heights, and it has a unity lacking in *Choreartium*, since all the action centres round the person of the Musician

and seems to flow from him. Its faults are those inherent in symphonic ballet: certain beginnings and endings of movement and lifts for which the music has no equivalent and which suddenly jar and shock. The setting, by Bérard, immediately strikes the right romantic note, but the costumes again present a problem; those same draperies and tights that we have come to think of as "symphonic costume" which require bare feet, arms and legs to be really in keeping.

The second movement, in the ballroom with its swirling couples waltzing, is more conventionally balletic, because the music is more definitely dance music. The scene is a beautiful and satisfying thing in itself, but it rather loses sight of the drama. The dance beguiles us so much that the quest of the Musician for his Beloved becomes a secondary matter. Ashton, who has treated the identical subject in *Apparitions*, has made his ballroom scene more moving by treating his whirling couples as a background to the drama.

The white costumes against the red colonnaded room are not merely striking in themselves, but belong to the ballet, a rarity in these works where the music dictates the whole manner.

The third movement presented the greatest problem of all, through both its length and its type. The first movement spoke of conflicting emotions, the second was a waltz; this third tells a story, but not in direct narrative. The Musician is feeling, groping his way. He has halted by a pastoral scene, beguiled by its serenity. He sees his ideal, but she is only an image. It is the last period of calm before the violence to come, and a hint of that violence is conveyed by the sudden gusts of wind. Listening to the music the problem of presenting parallel action to so ruminative a mood seems insoluble. Yet Massine has succeeded in creating some of the noblest choreography of this generation: the only pastoral ballet that is convincing. He has fully grasped the mood and attempts no direct narrative. The Musician is there, a passive figure, but one who dominates the action dramatically, though not physically. It is obvious that the action we are watching is being seen through his eyes and is closely related to his sorrows. When he leaves the stage nothing but the wind remains. In this scene Massine tells the whole story. It is complete in itself, a deeply moving study of artistic frustration.

The next scene, where the Musician who has murdered his

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Beloved is tried and executed, the famous death march, is the most obviously dramatic; the first to tell a direct narrative. Bérard, the painter, has collaborated admirably with Massine in presenting a period picture, the biting satire of Daumier. The judges are executioners, the executioners sadists. The Musician indicates that the suffering is moral as well as physical. This act treats social satire in very much the same manner as Kurt Jooss has done in *The Green Table*. It is a new departure in Russian Ballet.

The final act, a witches' sabbath, the struggle between Church and hell for the Musician's soul, is in some respects the weakest dramatically, though for complexity of detail and pattern it is worthy of a Breughel or Hieronymous Bosch. This scene, so much a set piece of the Romantic period, has been treated many times recently. Ashton was the first to do so in *Apparitions*; then Fokine in *Don Juan*; and Nijinska in *The Legend of Cracow*. Fokine's version was simpler and more immediately effective, because the eye could take in the whole at a first glance; but Massine has conveyed better than anyone the danger to the soul as apart from the danger to the body. The moment where the Beloved has turned into a witch is one of the most gruesome in all ballet. With repeated viewings this scene grows greatly in intensity, and the manner in which the choreographer has indicated the mediævalism of the Second Empire is an extraordinary *tour de force*.

*La Symphonie Fantastique* as a whole is a monumental work.

There is yet another group of works with which I propose to deal. They are in the repertoire of our national company at Sadler's Wells and have a considerable importance, not only because they are good in themselves, but because they are landmarks in the development of English Ballet. They may be considered standard works in the sense that I have been using the word. Other important works in this repertoire have already been dealt with in the sketches of their creators.

### (XIV) JOB: THE RAKE'S PROGRESS: BAR AUX FOLIES BERGÈRE *Inspiration from painting*

*Job*, to music by Vaughan Williams, was created for the Camargo Society by Ninette de Valois. It is a smart thing to call this an admirable work and then to say, "but of course it

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is not a ballet." On the programme itself it is styled a masque, which is also inaccurate. Such nomenclature has very little importance, but it must be corrected or it leads us on a false trail. If *Job* is not a ballet, then there are only a score of ballets in existence today. There is an idea that ballet must consist of a series of set dances, and if those dances do not follow in quick succession and are not underlined so that the veriest tyro cannot miss them, it becomes the thing to say, "There is not enough dancing in this ballet."

*Job* is all dancing; movement guided by music is dancing and nothing else. It is essential to understand once and for all that in ballet, just as in opera, there is *aria* and *recitative*. *Job* has its grand aria, Satan's dance; it has magnificent choral passages, and it uses recitative.

It tells the story of *Job* in terms of Blake, an extremely risky thing that has here succeeded beyond a doubt. The work of a painter is static, the choreographer must make it move, but always in the spirit of the painter. He must, in fact, paint thousands of pictures in his manner. Already the nature of the art binds de Valois to the music; when she seeks pictorial inspiration she is bound to a series of paintings as well, greatly increasing the difficulty of the art. All choreographers have found inspiration in painting, but only occasional inspiration, not the idea for an entire work.

In *The Rake's Progress*, to specially written music by Gavin Gordon, de Valois has animated Hogarth's series of narrative pictures, perhaps a still more difficult task. Again she has succeeded in creating a truly English masterpiece. *The Rake's Progress*, while it has not the depth and pathos of the Russian masterpiece, is to English Ballet what *Petrouchka* is to Russian, a truly national expression.

In both these ballets de Valois reveals to an exceptional degree one of the indispensable assets of the choreographer, the ability to produce, an entirely different thing from creation. Production begins when creation has ceased. *The Rake's Progress* is full of interesting characterisation brought out in dancing. Even its minor characters, such as the woman with the fan who visits the asylum in the final scene, are complete. There is no *corps de ballet*, but a company of *dancer-actors*. A work of this type is truly English, because the new English dancer, lacking an inherited tradition, excels where she can hide her lack of self-

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confidence behind a positive role. She has the technique for the classics, but has still to find a full measure of assurance. She can best express herself through the medium of another character. Gavin Gordon's score is an admirable example of well-composed narrative music perfectly suited to its subject.

De Valois has tried to animate yet a third picture, Manet's *Bar aux Folies Bergère*, and has failed, for a very positive reason. Success was impossible from the start. Manet is not telling a story. He is not interested in the life of his famous barmaid. What interests him is the solution of the problem of her colour and shape in relation to the bottles on the bar, the red triangle of Bass, the chandelier and the illumination. That problem he has solved, and the solution can have no possible relationship to ballet. It is as absolute as a vase of roses or a bowl of fruit by the same painter. There can be no question of carrying it a stage farther. The result is that her characters are unconvincing, vaguely reminiscent of another painter, Toulouse-Lautrec, but on the whole more suggestive of the Gay-Paree of the weekend visiting Englishman. No impressionist painter can possibly inspire ballet. The problem of being inspired by another medium, painting, is the same as in the choice of the music. It must be susceptible to *translation*.

### (XV) CHECKMATE

#### *Symbolism and realism*

*Checkmate*, designed for the first visit of the Sadler's Wells Ballet to Paris and presented at the Champs Elysées in 1937, is the result of a long and close collaboration so characteristic of the work of Sadler's Wells today.

It tells the story of a symbolical game of chess played between Love and Death. The score, by Arthur Bliss, is descriptive and highly dramatic, though in its timing and at intervals in its volume it is conceived on an operatic rather than a balletic principle. De Valois introduces her players in a short scene clearly indicating the nature of the struggle, then the curtain rises on the chessboard and we see the preparations for war. The characters start as completely impersonal beings, very gradually gaining our sympathy as they assume personalities; until we take a vivid interest in the fortunes of the game, siding with the dotard Red King and his loving young wife and with

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their chivalrous champion Knight against the ruthless Judith-like Black Queen. De Valois has succeeded in conveying not only the tension of the game, but its ultimate importance, alternating hope and despair like a skilled teller of fables in the bazaar.

McKnight Kauffer's décor and costumes are among the most successful in modern ballet. The background shows up the movement, the scene helps to tell the story, the colour scheme echoes the dramatic intensity of the music. In conception the decoration is a skilful compromise between reality and abstraction, just as the dancers are half puppet and half human; a method that suggests vast possibilities in bringing the scenic element back to its partnership in the whole.

### (XVI) FAÇADE

#### *A burlesque*

The *suite de danses* known as *Façade*, to music by William Walton, was created for the Camargo Society by Frederick Ashton in 1931. It proved immediately popular, and was taken into the repertoire of the Ballet Club and of Sadler's Wells. It is performed several times every season, and its continued success proves that the humour is not ephemeral.

*Façade* is a burlesque of dancing in terms of dancing. With extraordinary observation Ashton has seized upon the characteristics of various types of dance and has caricatured them to exactly the same degree that Walton has done in his music. Such a burlesque as apart from satire is a definitely English characteristic, and *Façade* is not an imitation Russian ballet, but a truly original contribution.

There is a tendency to decry all ballet that does not aim deliberately at beauty, and for that reason the merits of so light-hearted a work might easily be overlooked. There is no precedent to suggest that ballet cannot include burlesque, and there are accounts of burlesques in which the Kings of France took part. The burlesque is only bad if it is not "translated," and *Façade* is yet another striking example of the notion that I explained in the case of *The Three-cornered Hat*.

The Polka is the most stimulating and original when a classical dancer removes her skirt and performs a ridiculous little dance, but one that at the same time is extremely difficult. One says,



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in fact, "all this preparation and all this technique to express that!" and laughs, as one always does at pomposity and anti-climax. The tap-dance and the shooting dance belong to the humour of a Coward; the Waltz, with its focal point the legs, is a brilliant piece of observation.

### (XVII) LES PATINEURS: LES RENDEZVOUS

*Dancing for the sake of dancing—almost*

Each of these ballets of Frederick Ashton's is connected by a slender idea; each one an admirable success because the medium has been handled with consummate tact.

*Les Patineurs* is the *translation* of skating in terms of ballet, a burlesque like *Façade*, but one which has as its object the revelation of an astonishing variety of virtuoso technique. To burlesque skating alone might be ingenious, but it would soon become monotonous. While Ashton has been consistent and has never allowed us to forget that the dancers are on ice, he has made each dance technically exciting in itself. Meyerbeer's music is simple, Ashton's action is complex, with the result that we can take it all in at a glance. So skilfully interwoven are his dances, so rapidly do they succeed one another, that what might be a *suite de danses* is actually a ballet. The drama is in the action and not in the idea. The audience asks the question: "What is going to happen next?" The result is the exceedingly brilliant handling of classicism: dancing for the sake of dancing—almost. And the *almost* gives it a character that makes it acceptable to a modern audience.

*Les Rendezvous* is also a ballet entirely composed of *arias*. Its theme is brilliantly simple, meetings and partings, and admirably suited to Auber's music. It would be difficult to imagine a theme that could be more directly conveyed in movement or that could link one dance to the next in such logical and rapid succession. Remove the connecting link and the result is a competent commonplace.

In these ballets Ashton challenges the Russians on their own ground, using his dancers with no character disguise.

For both these works William Chappell, a dancer, has devised settings and costumes that are highly effective.

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### (XVIII) HOROSCOPE

#### *The triumph of collaboration*

*Horoscope* is a finely planned work, a close collaboration in the Diaghileff sense of the word. The subject of a couple separated and then united by their guiding stars was conceived by the composer, Constant Lambert. It is simple and easily told in movement. He starts with a short introduction, monotonous and mathematical, a fine piece of theatre that makes the spectator concentrate, paving the way for a violent opening. Ashton, the choreographer, has taken full advantage of every opportunity, contrasting the violent and the tender, blending them and ending on a triumphantly tender note. Sophie Fedorovitch, who has designed the settings and costumes, has, like Ashton, been closely guided by the music. There is one moment in which the unity of idea is particularly striking: when, ushered in by the brass, the violent characters in red invade the calm, pale characters with irresistible force, forming a pattern of moving beauty. In this work Ashton for the first time uses a *corps de ballet* with as much force and originality as he does his leading dancers, and shows a complete mastery of the medium.

### (XIX) THE WISE AND FOOLISH VIRGINS

#### *Painting and music meet*

This is a work of extraordinary serenity and completeness, the creation of a mature choreographer. In it he tells the parable as seen through Renaissance eyes, and his use of Italian painting is both sure and subtle. It has been completely translated for the stage. There is no insistence on the easily composed and easily identified *tableau vivant*. From the moment that he created the slight but charming *Florentine Picture*, Ashton has been preparing himself for this. Always happy in the *pas de deux*, here he handles the whole composition with mastery.

I wrote that the inspiration was pictorial; that is only half the truth. It is equally musical. The movement and unfolding of the narrative flow directly from the Bach music so brilliantly arranged and orchestrated by William Walton. Ashton has provided the perfect meeting-place for music and painting.

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That is the ideal of ballet, the perfect fusion of the arts composing it.

Once again Ashton shows himself in the great tradition of Fokine—telling his story entirely in movement, building his characterisation through movement, and placing no emphasis on facial expression. In this he differs from the direction that British choreography seems to be taking.

### (XX) DANTE SONATA

*A ballet of actuality*

This powerful work shows Ashton in a new mood. We have seen his wit and humour, his elegance, his serenity. This is a ballet as much inspired by the contemporary scene as Jooss' *Green Table*, but less direct in its presentation. Jooss shows us irony and satire, Ashton horror and compassion. We have already had a glimpse of that Ashton in *Horoscope*. This is a perfectly controlled work of passionate intensity. It gives the lie to those who dismiss ballet as escapism and deny that it can comment on actuality. It can and does, but subtly. None of these characters bears the label "Poland" or "Democracy" or "Totalitarianism," but there is little doubt of Ashton's meaning from the rise of the curtain till the unforgettable final tableau when good as well as evil find nothing but suffering. Such a ballet cannot be translated into words, it is the farthest removed from literature, but there is no mistaking the emotions that it inspires.

### (XXI) HAMLET

*The choreographer as literary critic*

This is Robert Helpmann's second ballet, following the successful *Comus*, in which he wedded the masque and the ballet, poetry and the dance, with a considerable measure of success.

Helpmann has taken a literary subject; but as a great "theatremann" has avoided the many and obvious pitfalls and has remained true to his medium. Others have taken Shakespeare for reasons I have never understood, and have told the stories of the selected plays, usually inadequately. One can only ask oneself: Why? Why? When Shakespeare has done so to

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perfection ! Why ? When the story itself is of no importance, when it was already second or third hand ! When Shakespeare gave it life and beauty !

Helpmann has done nothing of the kind, he has given us the choreographer's comment on Hamlet, a very different matter. He shows us what goes on in Hamlet's mind when, like a drowning man, his life passes in review through his fevered and dying brain. He has shown us this, as he can in his medium, by a series of images that interpret the story according to modern psychology. He does not insist or elaborate, but presents these images dramatically. This is literary criticism perfectly *translated* into ballet, and as such it is an entirely new departure.

One must mention the important rôle that Leslie Hurry's costumes and décor play in completing the work and making it a whole. They are the link between Tchaikovsky's romanticism and Helpmann's modern viewpoint.

The ballet at Sadler's Wells, as the commentary on these and other works, all of them recent, so clearly indicates, shows a knowledge both of the traditions and of the nature of ballet that seems in danger of being forgotten by the Russians of today. A ballet is made or destroyed by its initial conception. It must be insisted upon once again: Music, idea, choreography, decoration must express each in its own way and together a common idea.

### (XXII) THE GREEN TABLE

#### *A major work outside the Russian tradition*

I include one ballet outside the Russian tradition because it is a work of outstanding merit, of continued topical interest that has been applauded throughout the whole civilised world, the Fascist countries excluded.

Kurt Jooss and his group of dancers from Essen first came into prominence when they won the first prize in the choreographic competition inaugurated by Les Archives Internationales de la Danse. The prize-winning work was *The Green Table*, and though Kurt Jooss has since produced many ballets of considerable merit, he remains the creator of one work, the justification for the existence of the group and for its world travels.

*The Green Table* is a powerful indictment of the failure of

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the League of Nations. The curtain rises on an international conference, the senile senators talk, quarrel, shots are exchanged, and then we are shown what happens when Death is let loose. The curtain falls on a repetition of the first act, platitudes, arguments, and shots. Since its creation *The Green Table* has become more and more topical.

Kurt Jooss has evolved a technique of his own, a blend of the Central European methods of Laban with a foundation of ballet technique. His company can boast the most perfect *ensemble* of any today—lightness, musicality, and precision. His fault seems to be his unwillingness to take the fullest advantage of ballet technique. Such a man has the unique opportunity of being able to add much that is valuable to the old system and to use it in new ways. His most expressive scenes in *The Green Table* are the first and last, where the dancers are deliberately limited in movement by their seated positions round the table. Where they are allowed full movement one feels the limitations imposed by his system. Jooss, using ballet technique plus what he has shown us he could add, should be the creator of a series of effective ballets, instead of justly famed as the creator of one great imaginative work.

## DETAILS OF THE WORKS COMMENTED ON IN THIS CHAPTER

*Giselle*: a ballet in two acts by Théophile Gautier and the Chevalier de Saint-Georges after a suggestion by Heine. Choreography by Coralli, music by Adolph Adam. Created in 1841, with Carlotta Grisi as Giselle. Revived by Diaghileff in 1911 for Karsavina and Nijinsky. Danced by Pavlova, Spessivtseva, Markova, Fonteyn.

*The Swan Lake*: a ballet in four acts by Modeste Tchaikovsky. Choreography by Petipa and Ivanoff. First performed in 1877. Revived in 1894 with Legnani in the leading role. Has been danced by all the leading Russian *ballerinas*. Revived by Diaghileff in various abbreviated forms, the best known being a one-act version consisting mainly of Act II of the original. Given in full at Sadler's Wells.

*Aurora's Wedding*: a one-act abbreviation of *The Sleeping Princess*. Choreography by Petipa, music by Tchaikovsky. The original work given at the Maryinsky in 1890, with Carlotta Brianza as the Princess, Aurora and Cecchetti as the Blue Bird

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and the Fairy Carabosse. Revived by Diaghileff at the Alhambra in 1921, with Trefilova, Egorova, Spessivtseva, and Lopokova alternating as *ballerina*. Presented in one act in Paris, 1922. Revived by de Basil in 1935.

*Les Sylphides*: a romantic reverie in one act by Michael Fokine to music by Chopin. Created as *Chopiniana* for a charity fête in 1908. Presented by Diaghileff the following year. In the repertoire of every ballet company today.

*Le Spectre de la Rose*: choreographic poem in one act by Jean Louis Vandoyer after a poem by Gautier. Produced by Diaghileff in 1910, with Karsavina and Nijinsky. In every repertoire today.

*Carnaval*: a ballet in one act by Fokine, choreography by Fokine, music by Schumann. Décor and costumes by Bakst. Composed for a charity, then presented by Diaghileff in 1910, with Nijinsky as Harlequin. In every repertoire today.

*Scheherazade*: a ballet in one act by Michael Fokine. Choreography by Fokine, music by Rimsky-Korsakov, décors and costumes by Bakst. Presented by Diaghileff in 1910. Original cast: Ida Rubinstein as Zobeide, Nijinsky as the Golden Slave. Zobeide subsequently taken by Karsavina. Revived by de Basil, 1935; René Blum, 1936.

*Thamar*: a ballet in one act by Fokine after Lermontov's poem. Choreography by Fokine, music by Balakirev, décors and costumes by Bakst. Produced in 1912 by Diaghileff. Original cast: Karsavina as Thamar, Bolm as the Prince. Revived by de Basil, 1935.

*Prince Igor*: the Polovtsian dances to Borodin's opera. Choreography by Fokine, décor and costumes originally by Roerich. Another version by Korovin, presented by Diaghileff in 1909, with Adolph Bolm in the leading role, maintained in the repertoire ever since. Given by de Basil, René Blum, and Léon Woizikowski.

*Petrouchka*: dance drama in four scenes by Alexandre Benois and Michael Fokine. Choreography by Fokine, music by Stravinsky, décors and costumes by Benois. First presented by Diaghileff in 1911. Original cast: Karsavina, the Dancer; Nijinsky, Petrouchka; Orloff, the Moor. Revived by de Basil, 1922, René Blum, and Léon Woizikowski.

*L'Epreuve d'Amour*: a ballet in one act by André Derain and Michael Fokine; choreography by Fokine, music by Mozart,

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décor and costumes by Derain. Presented by René Blum in 1936, with Nemtchinova as Chung Yang, Eglevsky as the Lover, Yazvinsky as the Mandarin.

*The Three-cornered Hat*: a ballet in one act by Martinez Sierra after a story by Alarcon. Choreography by Massine, music by da Falla, décor and costumes and drop-curtain by Picasso. Presented by Diaghileff in 1919, with Karsavina and Massine. Revived by de Basil, 1934, with Toumanova and Massine.

*La Boutique Fantasque*: a ballet in one act, with choreography by Massine, music by Rossini, arranged and orchestrated by Respighi. Décor, costumes, and drop-curtains by Derain. Presented by Diaghileff in 1919, with Lopokova and Massine as the can-can dancers. Revived by de Basil in 1935 with Danilova and Massine.

*Le Beau Danube*: a ballet in one act by Massine. Choreography by Massine, music by Johann Strauss, costumes by Etienne de Beaumont, décor by Polunin after Guys. First produced for Etienne de Beaumont in 1923 with Lopokova, Marra, and Massine. Revived by de Basil in a new form with Danilova, Riabouchinska, and Massine, 1933.

*Jeux d'Enfants*: a ballet in one act by Boris Kochno. Choreography by Massine, music by Bizet, décor, costumes, and drop-curtain by Miro. Presented by de Basil in 1932, with Toumanova as the Top, Riabouchinska as the Child, Lichine as the Traveller, Woizikowski as the Sportsman.

*Cotillon*: a ballet in one act by Boris Kochno. Choreography by Balanchine, music by Chabrier, décor by Bérard. Produced for de Basil in 1932, with Toumanova, Woizikowski, Lichine, and Rostova.

*La Symphonie Fantastique*: choreographic symphony in five scenes. Music and theme by Berlioz, choreography by Massine, décor and costumes by Bérard. Produced for de Basil in 1936, with Toumanova as the Beloved, Massine as the Musician.

*Job*: a masque for dancing in eight scenes by Geoffrey Keynes from the Biblical story. Music by Vaughan Williams, décor and costumes after Blake by G. Raverat, masks by Hedley Briggs. Choreography by Ninette de Valois. Produced for the Camargo Society in 1931, now in Sadler's Wells repertoire. Anton Dolin as Satan; in revivals, Robert Helpmann.

*The Rake's Progress*: a ballet in six scenes by Gavin Gordon (after Hogarth). Music by Gavin Gordon, choreography by

de Valois, décor and costumes by Rex Whistler. Produced in 1935 with Walter Gore as the Rake, Markova as the Girl. Revived with Robert Helpmann and Elizabeth Miller.

*Bar aux Folies Bergère*: a one-act ballet by Ninette de Valois. Choreography by de Valois, décor and costumes by William Chappell. Ballet Club production in 1934. Markova as La Goulue.

*Checkmate*: a ballet in a prologue and one scene by Arthur Bliss. Choreography by Ninette de Valois, décor and costumes by McKnight Kauffer. Produced at Sadler's Wells in 1937 with June Brae as the Black Queen, Pamela May as the Red Queen, Robert Helpmann as the Red King, Harold Turner as the Red Knight.

*Façade: suite de danses* in one act by William Walton. Choreography by Frederick Ashton, music by William Walton, décor and costumes by John Armstrong. Camargo Society production in 1931, with Lopokova as the Milkmaid, Markova in the Polka.

*Les Patineurs*: a ballet in one act with music by Meyerbeer, selected by Constant Lambert. Choreography by Frederick Ashton, décor and costumes by William Chappell. Sadler's Wells, 1937, with Harold Turner, Mary Honer, Elizabeth Miller, June Brae, Pamela May, and Margot Fonteyn.

*Les Rendezvous*: a ballet in one act with music by Auber (selected by Constant Lambert). Choreography by Ashton, décor and costumes (two versions) by William Chappell. Sadler's Wells, 1935.

*Horoscope*: a ballet in three scenes by Constant Lambert. Music by Constant Lambert, choreography by Frederick Ashton, décor and costumes by Fedorovitch. Margot Fonteyn and Michael Sornes, the Lovers; Richard Ellis and Alan Carter, the Twins; Pamela May, the Moon.

*The Wise and Foolish Virgins*: music from Bach, orchestrated by William Walton. Décor by Rex Whistler, choreography by Frederick Ashton. Created at Sadler's Wells, 1939.

*The Dante Sonata*: music by Liszt. Décor by Sophie Fedorovitch, choreography by Frederick Ashton. Created at Sadler's Wells, 1940.

*Hamlet*: music by Tchaikovsky. Décor by Leslie Hurry, choreography by Robert Helpmann. Created at the New Theatre, 1943.

Other important works are discussed under different headings.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### APPRECIATION: STUDIES OF SOME CONTEMPORARY DANCERS

*(A practical application of Chapter Three)*

I HAVE purposely kept any reference to the dancers themselves out of the main body of the text, so as not to confuse criticism with personalities. The modern critical tendency has been to stress the rôle of the performers at the expense of a clear view of the art as a whole. Also, in any writing on young dancers the critic is faced with a grave difficulty, since the young dancer of today who usually makes a name while she is still immature mentally and physically varies almost from performance to performance. There is an awkward age between fifteen and eighteen during which the young dancer must adjust herself. She owes her first success to youthful charm and intuition. Will she succeed as a conscious artist? I have seen many promising dancers disappear during this awkward age. A knowledge of diet and hygiene would be of the greatest value in assisting the body in adapting itself to a difficult life.

The critic who shows any enthusiasm at all and who does not continually hedge must inevitably be accused of a lack of consistency, especially by those actively in the movement themselves. It is far easier to think that the critic has shifted his ground than to see that one has failed to make progress. The critic cannot continually be throwing cold water on young dancers, and owes it to his public to risk prophecies.

However, risk or no risk, a study such as this to be complete must contain some account of the leading dancers of today, especially since the historical section has shown us the enormous influence of the individual dancer on the art as a whole. A dancer may exert such an influence perfectly unconsciously and without the possession of exceptional artistry. The type of Ida Rubinstein, not a classically trained dancer at all, undoubtedly inspired both Fokine and Bakst to create a series of exotic ballets.

The artists I have chosen are for the most part mature enough not to make my statements too wild, though with few exceptions they are still in their 'teens. The ballet of the next ten years will be largely shown to us through them.

Just as I have judged the ballets in the last chapter through the

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standards laid down in my æsthetic background, so have I judged the dancers. It has obviously been impossible to include every dancer of note, and I do not pretend that this is a complete list of the best dancers of the day, certainly not of all those whose work interests me. I have included those whose progress best illustrates some particular point that has already been discussed.

The case of the young English dancers is especially interesting and important, since their progress has been normal, and we are no longer accustomed to normal progress in ballet, but to jerky ups and downs, caused by unsuitable work and excess of work. Each of these dancers represented a problem in education, solved, not by chance, but by the finest system of education in ballet today. The result in five years has been startling.

There is as yet no clearly defined English school and therefore no marked difference between the best of the English and the best of the Russian dancers. The difference can be seen through a study of the average, the small *solist* and the *corps de ballet* dancer. The average Russian is markedly superior in everything save the neat and correct execution of steps. She has more self-confidence, more to express, and a greater sense of the stage. If her technique is untidy, she is more of a dancer, and she can finish her sequence of steps with a strong climax. The average English dancer is still repressed by the nature of her education, the good old slogans of "play the game," "sink yourself in the team," "it's bad form to show off"; and "showing off" is the very thing she must do.

One of the reasons for the extraordinary success of the Wells and Ballet Club schools in turning out personalities lies in the fact that the stage is there the whole time, the sole aim of the pupils, instead of examinations or the vague hope of getting into some show or other.

### (A) IN RUSSIAN BALLET

#### (i) Alexandra Danilova

Alexandra Danilova is the most finished dancer of our period, the last of a certain type of stylist trained through the bounty of a court and not with haphazard speed. Her grounding has been so thorough that she has been able to improve as an artist daily but perceptibly since she has been a *prima ballerina*. Danilova first came to London in 1924 with Georges Balan-

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chine and a small group, calling themselves the Russian State Dancers. She joined the Diaghileff Ballet the following year, and soon became the last *ballerina* of the company.

When the de Basil Ballet was formed, she was young enough to fit in with his policy of youth, old enough to be a link with the past. Her work has been, not only of the greatest value in itself, but also as an example to the young dancers of the company.

Danilova has not a wide emotional range, but her sense of style and stagecraft, her pure classicism, and her ideal build, with the magnificently straight knees of the *ballerina*, allow her considerable versatility in roles of nobility or light humour, from the uncompromising classicism of *The Swan Lake* to the sparkling *soubrette* roles in *Le Beau Danube*, *La Boutique Fantasque*, and *The Good-humoured Ladies*. She is the only dancer in the revival of this last ballet to capture the delicate-period style.

Her technique is not that of a virtuoso, but it is so well subordinated to the roles she interprets that one does not think of her in terms of technique. Today she remains faithful to ballet.

### (II) Irina Baronová

Baronova is the type of modern classical dancer with a wide emotional range and beautiful fluidity of movement.

Her parents settled in Rumania during the early days of the Russian Revolution, and she received her first lessons there. At about the age of nine she came to Paris to study with Preobrazjenska. Her first engagement was at the age of twelve, at the Mogador, in Offenbach's *Orphée aux Enfers* in a ballet arranged by Balanchine. She immediately attracted critical attention. She joined de Basil in 1932, becoming a *ballerina* in 1933 when the company came to the Alhambra. On the first night she appeared in *Les Sylphides*, *Les Présages*, and *Le Beau Danube*, showing an extraordinary versatility and a brilliantly easy technique. She was largely responsible for the historic success of that first season, a success that launched *balletomania* in England. As an actress she has shone in such roles as Lady Gay in *Union Pacific*, the midnette in *Le Beau Danube*, and most especially as the Queen of Shemakhan in *Le Coq d'Or*, a role of great length and complexity. She has gone through the awkward age with extraordinary ease, growing in both depth

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and brilliance from season to season. The only menace that threatens her future—and this applies to every Russian dancer today—is that of overwork.

After an interruption to her career through ill-health, Baronova is now dancing in musical comedy.

### (iii) *Tamara Toumanova*

It is Toumanova who more than anyone launched the idea of the baby *ballerina*.

She was born in Russia during the Revolution; her parents escaped through Siberia to Shanghai. After seeing Pavlova she determined to become a dancer. She went to Paris at the age of seven and learnt with Preobrajenska. At the age of nine she appeared at the Opéra, Paris, as a guest artist, and later kept herself by giving dance recitals. Discovered by Balanchine, she joined de Basil in 1932, creating three outstanding roles in *Concurrence*, *Cotillon*, and *Jeux d'Enfants*, in which her *soulettes* caused a sensation that played a great role in popularising the young ballet and sending children to the dance studios. At the same time she appeared in revivals of standard works. In 1933 she left de Basil to appear with *Les Ballets*, 1933, returning to him later in the year.

Toumanova is outstandingly beautiful, with a very strong technique that she is inclined to force at times. She is a classical dancer who at her best can give a memorable performance in *Aurora's Wedding*, and a character dancer who has appeared in *The Three-cornered Hat* with success. It is Balanchine, however, who has understood her the best, building roles round her physique and personality.

Toumanova has unquestionably played a major role amongst contemporary dancers, but she has yet to find herself fully and dance consistently throughout a season. Forcing and overwork have greatly hampered her in the past, and her future success lies in very cautious handling.

She is now acting on the films.

### (iv) *Tatiana Riabouchinska*

Of all the young dancers Riabouchinska is unquestionably the best individual.

Her mother was a dancer, and she is the only second-genera-

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tion dancer of her group. She learned in Paris from Volinine and then Kchesinska, and joined the Balieff Chauve-Souris, with whom she toured. She joined de Basil in 1932.

Riabouchinska is not a purely classical dancer, lacking the necessary hardness and attack. She is in no sense a character dancer and, save in *Les Sylphides*, not a romantic. It is, indeed, difficult to attach to her any label. She has almost launched a style. She is incredibly light, with a fine elevation and beautiful arms, the very reverse of a *terre-à-terre* dancer. Her personality, too, is such that she excels in roles that are gay or fey, as the Butterfly in *Carnaval*, Frivolity in *Les Présages*, or the Child in *Jeux d'Enfants*. Her gaiety is not that of the *soubrette*, it is something far more intangible. One associates her with birds and butterflies. She glitters rather than glows. Her technique is not always precise, but it is invariably effective.

She has recently been dancing in operette.

### (v) *Nina Verchinina*

Nina Verchinina has not been seen very often of late, but she is a dancer of considerable importance, more closely associated with the roles she has created than any other dancer save Riabouchinska.

For certain parts of his symphonies, the most symphonic in structure, Massine needed a certain type of dancer, classically trained but part Duncan. In Nina Verchinina, classicism and the type of dancing that is called Central European have met, showing the value of the classical grounding and the value of points in accentuating, not lightness, this time, but the strength of steel. As Action in *Les Présages* and in the second part of *Choreartium*, Verchinina has created a new type, a fact that can be fully appreciated when we see the same roles competently performed, but without the musical subtlety and understanding that informs them and that makes one talk of a Verchinina role, in spite of all rules to the contrary.

### (vi) *Alicia Markova*

Markova was the first child prodigy in Russian Ballet.

She learnt from the late Seraphine Astafieva, and, after various commercial engagements, joined the Diaghileff Ballet in 1925 at

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the age of fourteen, dancing the *adagio* of *The Swan Lake* the same year. For Diaghileff she created the Nightingale, danced the Cat, and the Blue Bird.

After Diaghileff's death she undertook many commercial engagements, and danced with the young English Ballet at the Camargo Society, the Ballet Club, Sadler's Wells, and with her own company.

Markova is, in physique and temperament, a truly classical dancer in the direct line of Pavlova and Spessiva, though technically she has less finish and emotionally her range is smaller. She is light, precise, and magnificently competent in everything she undertakes. A lack of guidance during the last few years has robbed her of a certain grandeur of style, and has tended to betray her into mannerisms which careful handling can soon eradicate.

Within clearly defined limits, she is classical and modern rather than romantic; she occupies a unique position in contemporary ballet, and has already played a major role in the history of the art in England.

Since the war Markova has been dancing with The Ballet Theatre in America. She has greatly added to her reputation and to the reputation of classical ballet in that country.

### (vii) David Lichine

David Lichine first attracted attention in the Ida Rubinstein Company, where he came under the influence of Nijinska. He joined the de Basil Ballet in 1932.

He is a dancer of outstanding talent, requiring the discipline of a Cecchetti to do himself full justice. By temperament he is not a classical dancer, but at times he succeeds in classical roles and there is always something interesting in what he does, even when he breaks through the rigid classical reserve. Lichine is at his best in romantic or character roles, in anything that exploits vitality and robustness rather than subtlety. At his worst he can be flamboyant in the extreme. At a time when few male dancers have a positive personality, such a dancer is of the greatest importance. He has much to say, and if he perfects his manner of presentation, he will rank high among contemporary influences on the dance.

Lichine has recently been producing ballet for the films a

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well as for the ballet, and has been appearing in some of those films. His work in this medium is competent, but remains filmed ballet rather than ballet for the films.

### (viii) *Nana Gollner*

Nana Gollner, a Hollywood girl with a film contract, studied with Theodor Kosloff. She joined the de Basil Ballet and then left to dance ballerina roles for René Blum. She is at present ballerina for the de Basil company.

She has a magnificent, easy technique and the true ballerina physique. Her dancing in *The Swan Lake* is one of the outstanding performances of the day.

## (B) IN ENGLISH BALLET

### (i) *Pearl Argyle*

Although Pearl Argyle has retired, this account of her work (1938) is retained, because she has played a major role in the popularisation of British ballet, as an English not an Anglo-Russian dancer.

Pearl Argyle was the first English dancer to make a name as such. She started her training late with Marie Rambert, who launched her at the Ballet Club; danced at the Camargo Society, with Balanchine in *Les Ballets*, 1933, and at Sadler's Wells.

Great physical beauty has been both an asset and a handicap, since it has often obscured very real gifts. Pearl Argyle was limited in technique and in range of expression, but within her limits her work showed that she understood herself; she was a truly finished artist, mature and serene, but not cold. Where her technique failed in the virtuoso roles, she could often save herself by her stagecraft. Her walk before the *adagio*, revealing moment, immediately convinced the audience of her grasp.

### (ii) *Margot Fonteyn*

Margot Fonteyn is the first *ballerina* to be produced by the National Ballet at Sadler's Wells.

She started her dancing in Shanghai, studied for a short time with Astafieva, and then joined the school at Sadler's Wells, of which she is the product. Her first role was in a revival of

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Ashton's *Rio Grande*. When Markova left the company, inherited many of her roles.

Fonteyn is ideally built, an essentially intelligent dancer v rare musicality. She has progressed from a slow, drear eternal Sylphide mood into an intensity of attack that opened to her every role in the classical repertoire. Togeth with Baronova, she has the greatest range in contempor ballet, from the sparkle of *The Swan Lake*, Act III, with thirty-two *fouettés*, to the pure romance of *Les Sylphides* and modern sophistication of *A Wedding Bouquet*. In *Giselle* gives the most outstanding performance to be seen in ba today: deeply emotional, but always controlled by the r period framework.

During the war years Fonteyn has created many impor rôles in *The Wanderer*, *The Wise Virgins*, *Dante Sonata*, *Han Comus*, and has given a memorable interpretation of Swanh in *Coppelia*. Free of all mannerisms, she has become a *balle assoluta*.

Margot Fonteyn is a striking example of the working Sadler's Wells, both as a school and as a company, where car handling develops all that is best in the artist. She is a t dancer, but she has been studied and developed from seaon season with the greatest care. The Sadler's Wells syster version of the old Russian system adapted to present-day n and economics, can alone develop a fully matured compun

### (III) Pamela May

Pamela May shows the case of someone who always posse a true conception of dancing, moving body and arms, but r aging them wildly in a frenzy of movement. This concep needed discipline to give it a meaning. She has now acqu a discipline that makes of her a fine classical dancer, wi magnificent line.

Her style, curiously enough, makes her one of the r characteristically Russian dancers of today, which she show a leading Swan in *The Swan Lake* and the Queen of the I in *Giselle*. She is more purely classical than any dancer in same stage of development. Another quality she possesses sense of measure. She could create true sympathy for the Queen in *Checkmate*, yet in *Horoscope* she realised that Asl

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was aiming at line and not characterisation. In her classical work she is rare in not adopting a Sylphides interpretation. She has the necessary equipment to distinguish herself and play an important role in the near future.

After an absence of two years Pamela May has returned to the ballet.

### (iv) *Robert Helpmann*

Today there are few male dancers in the ballet schools, and the male dancer, however inadequate, receives work whether he has value as an artist or not. Robert Helpmann is a magnificent exception, and would be an outstanding artist at any period.

Born in Adelaide, he studied in Australia under the influence of Pavlova, and came to England as a pupil of the Wells school. Within a short time he was dancing leading roles.

Without an extraordinary technique he is incapable of making an ungraceful movement, a fact that reveals first-class teaching. He has a strong personality, but so perfectly disciplined that he is able to make a personal success, yet to remain in the framework of the ballet as a whole and to carry out the choreographer's intentions as few prominent dancers can do. This ability is characteristic of English dancing today. Perfectly musical, he is a perfect partner, for partnering is a question of ear as well as of strength and good manners. His range is enormous: classical, romantic, broad farce, or subtle comedy. He shares with Massine alone the ultimate secret of true art in dancing, the ability to give positive value to a static pose.

The essence of Helpmann's work is his extraordinary intelligence and the fact that he is a born "theatre man." Since the war he has turned choreographer, has acted Hamlet, has broadcast, and appeared in the films. Ballet needs this all-round ability, and since the time of Noverre has tended to lose sight of the fact that ballet is the basis of all theatre.

The Wells has been fortunate in its material, but that so young a company could develop two of the outstanding dancers of our day, a Fonteyn and a Helpmann, shows the value of the school.

### (v) *Harold Turner*

Harold Turner started dancing in the Midlands, coming to Marie Rambert in London, who taught and produced him.

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One of his first important engagements was to dance as partner to Karsavina.

Turner is a magnificent technician and a truly virile personality an example to the majority of young dancers. He is a classic dancer of the old type rather than the new, the true *premier danseur*, brilliant rather than lyrical, but he has a wide enough range to be excellent in character and broad comedy: the Farmer in *Barabau*, the Tap Dancer in *Façade*. Such an artist illustrates better than anyone my remarks on male dancing, and should do much to remove the national prejudice against male dancers. Whether romantically clad or not, his masculinity is a positive contribution to the orchestration of dancing.

Since the war Turner has been dancing with the International Ballet.

### (vi) *Beryl Grey*

Outstanding among the younger dancers is the seventeen-year-old Beryl Grey, a product of the Sadler's Wells School. She is a classical dancer with a fluent technique and with very considerable natural grace. She has danced *The Swan Lake* with a beauty that ranks her with the Baronovas and Toumanovas of the s<sup>r</sup>age, and has doubled in many of Fonteyn's roles. It is easier as yet to discuss her interpretations, which are always pleasing and unforced, but if she can overcome the difficult years that have destroyed so many promising dancers, and there are signs that she will, Sadler's Wells will have produced another ballerina.

### (vii) *Sally Gilmour*

Marie Rambert is without doubt a great creator; one has only to glance at her record. She creates, not ballets, but the material for ballet—dances, choreographers, and scenic artists. There is no company today, Russian or English, that does not owe a large debt.

After having lost many of her "creations" to other companies, she has built anew, and Sally Gilmour succeeds Pearl Argus, Maude Lloyd, and Rambert's other jewels. She made her name in Andrée Howard's *Lady into Fox* with a performance of interpretative skill. Gilmour shows intelligence and quality in her work.

<sup>1</sup> See page 125.

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### (viii) *Other Dancers in English Ballet*

Never has the native ballet scene shown more promise. The English corps de ballet, noted in the past for discipline rather than personality, has developed with the opportunities afforded by the war. It is difficult to mention names, if such a record is not to become dated within a very short time, but there are many now who compel mention: Margaret Dale, a brilliant executant and a personality; Joan Sheldon, reminiscent of the great Sokolova in her attack; Pauline Clayden, who has real quality; Moyra Fraser, Moira Shearer, Anne Lascelles, and Jean Bedells.

Of a necessity the male dancers have suffered and the original male members of Sadler's Wells are in the Forces. But admirable work has been done by David Paltenghi, the type of *danseur noble* but with an intelligence that gives him a wider scope; Alexis Rassine, who only needs the experience to become outstanding, and Gordon Hamilton.

Since the last edition of this book many prominent dancers have retired or have left Sadler's Wells, among them June Brae, Elizabeth Miller, and Mary Honer. Their outstanding work has added to the tradition that is making our national ballet into an artistic force of major importance.

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### BALLET 1939-1944—A PRÉCIS OF DEVELOPMENT

#### (i) THE NATIONAL BALLET

DURING the war years, and in spite of the innumerable material difficulties, the Sadler's Wells company has proved itself a National Ballet. I have dealt with that aspect at considerable length in another work,<sup>1</sup> and it is only necessary here to take a hurried glance at the record. It amply confirms what I originally wrote in the body of the text about the soundness of the Wells planning.

The first consideration is the school. It has now been in existence long enough to pay a handsome dividend: 75 per cent. of the personnel of the company were trained in its own school. This means a uniformity of style without which a ballet company cannot exist as a distinct personality. Diaghileff's strongest period was when the majority of his dancers were trained at the Imperial Theatre schools. There has never been a lack of dancers in Britain; there was the lack of a style that makes ballet truly national. The school ensures permanence and is a national asset of very great value. In time to come it will attract pupils from all over the world. Its problem will be to develop a balanced curriculum that can, as in Russia, take care of the dancer's general education. The authorities are keenly aware of that problem.

During the period under review the Wells has shown creations by four choreographers: Ashton, de Valois, Helpmann, and Andrée Howard. It is particularly fortunate that Howard, creator of *Death and the Maiden* and *Lady into Fox*, should have had the opportunity of producing on a large scale. Her delicate sensibility needed this spur.

Judged by any standards seen in London since 1933, Sadler's Wells has proved itself the peer of the very best; and as this development has been planned, marking a gradual advance from season to season, there can be no doubt that at last, after a long history as an appreciative audience, this country has a true ballet tradition. Ninette de Valois has earned the right to rank with the great artistic creators, and that without mentioning either the obvious or the hidden obstacles of these war years.

<sup>1</sup> *The National Ballet.* (Black, 1943.)

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### (ii) MARIE RAMBERT

After a not altogether happy period at the Arts Theatre in conjunction with other companies, and then an interval, Marie Rambert, pioneer of ballet in this country, has been able to reform her company and to appear for C.E.M.A., in her own Mercury Theatre, and this is important. One is apt to write of Marie Rambert in the past, to acknowledge her work as the inspirer of Ashton, Argyle, and many others, and to leave it at that. Rambert, as an inspiring personality ever on the lookout for talent to develop, has a major part to play. Both by temperament, culture, and through the smaller scale on which she works she is admirably situated to experiment, to prevent ballet becoming too settled in its ways. There can be no school for choreographers; there can be a choreographic nursery, and Rambert has fulfilled that function with Ashton, Howard, Tudor, Staff, and many others.

### (iii) BALLET IN BRITAIN

After spending the early war years in America, the Ballet Jooss, under the auspices of C.E.M.A., has made a reappearance. *The Green Table* still remains the outstanding creation. Today, when its grim prophecy is actuality, it is even more impressive than formerly. It is a work that will endure. The new creations, however, reveal the limitations of movement self-imposed by Jooss. He tells a narrative admirably, but with too much literature at the expense of plastic art. The elaborate costumes used call out for scenery to complete the ballet, and there has been no advance in the use of music. One asks oneself if this obviously sincere artist, creator of a masterpiece and many works of rare charm such as *Ball in Old Vienna*, with his wonderfully precise company, will go much farther along the path he has chosen. At present he is sitting on a fence between ballet proper and the spoken drama of a *théâtre des quinze*. It seems as if either he must take in scenery, an orchestra, and a richer repertoire of movement, or add speech to a form of theatre that tends to become arid. I write with diffidence, and deliberately so, because Jooss has proved himself in the past and has trained a superb team. If only a personality would emerge from that team, even at

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the risk of disturbing what is a limited but almost monotone level of perfection!

Since the main text of this book was written, another large scale company has been formed—The International Ballet. It has shown hospitality to the classics and has produced some experimental works as *Everyman* and *Twelfth Night*. Experiment deserves encouragement, but the first subject would seem out of place in the ballet medium, especially wedded to the music of Richard Strauss, and the second requires the language of Shakespeare to make it anything more than a trivial tale with too many twists and turns to be easily told in ballet.

It is a remarkable fact that in spite of war a company of such a scale could have been formed and could have built up an important repertoire. It shows the extraordinary demand for ballet today. Escapism? Partly, but *re-creation* would be an apter word.

### (iv) THE RUSSIAN COMPANIES

These familiar and welcome visitors to pre-war England have found a home in America. They have undergone many splits and changes that it would require a weekly edition of any book to keep pace with them. The temptations of Hollywood and musical comedy have thinned the ranks of well-known dancers; others, mainly Americans, have taken their places, till Russian Ballet, as we know it, has become Russo-American Ballet, which may in time bring interesting results. America, with its rich mixed cultures, is a fine field for ballet, if enthusiasm can be checked by a respect for tradition. Our own Markova and Dolin have remained magnificent, true to their traditions, and no classical dancer since Pavlova has gained such a position as Markova. Long may the purity of her art flourish.

Two choreographers known to us here as beginners have made outstanding reputations: Anthony Tudor and Agnes de Mille; the famous Russians seem to have added little to their art. This and the increasingly American composition of the companies points to the end of the émigré *ballet russe* that we have known since the days of Diaghileff, and that gave us both the love and the practice of the art.

An epoch ended with the death in America (1943) of Fokine, who was the first modernist in ballet, though we think of him

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mistakenly as a classicist. He remains the greatest. In spite of the hundreds of productions since 1914, neither Fokine himself nor anyone else has equalled *Les Sylphides*, *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *Prince Igor*, *Scheherazade*, *Petrouchka*, *The Firebird*, with the exception of Fokine's own later inspiration, *L'Epreuve d'Amour*. It is fitting that he should have died after a triumphant success, *Bluebeard*, yet to be seen in England. Gradually these works will lose their style and the creator's many master touches. To have seen them produced by him, and to have watched him at work, building up his effects, was a great privilege. Apart from his works, Fokine's principles must be remembered for all time. They are the foundation upon which all the future must be built. If he is forgotten, as was Noverre until he came along, ballet will return once again to the music-hall, as an interlude between the red-nosed comic and the performing seals.

### (v) BEHIND THE SCENES

There are many encouraging things unknown to the general public going on behind the scenes in the world of ballet. There is the Royal Academy of Dancing to ensure that teaching retains its integrity, to maintain a general high standard from which the exceptional can come. There are enthusiastic ballet clubs all over the country, forming audiences aware of the finer points of taste and technique, and avoiding the pitfalls of uncritical adulation. There is the Production Club sponsored by the Royal Academy, a potentially great influence that will bring a practice of the art as distinct from the technique within reach of thousands of students and will so form a choreographic nursery. The conception of this club and the scope on which it is planned for peace-time development should make it of major importance.

And these influences are not only at work in the Mother Country. The Royal Academy is at work all over the Empire; its examinations have continued throughout the war. The inspirer of its activities is Adeline Genée, continuing her great career for the benefit of the country that first acclaimed her, seconded by P. J. S. Richardson, editor of the *Dancing Times* and joint founder of the Camargo Society; and, for the Production Club, that fine artist Ursula Moreton.

In Australia the split in Russian ballet has proved of great

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the risk of disturbing what is a limited but almost monotonous level of perfection !

Since the main text of this book was written, another large-scale company has been formed—The International Ballet. It has shown hospitality to the classics and has produced such experimental works as *Everyman* and *Twelfth Night*. Experiment deserves encouragement, but the first subject would seem out of place in the ballet medium, especially wedded to the music of Richard Strauss, and the second requires the language of Shakespeare to make it anything more than a trivial tale with too many twists and turns to be easily told in ballet.

It is a remarkable fact that in spite of war a company on such a scale could have been formed and could have built up an important repertoire. It shows the extraordinary demand for ballet today. Escapism ? Partly, but *re-creation* would be an apter word.

### (iv) THE RUSSIAN COMPANIES

These familiar\* and welcome visitors to pre-war England have found a home in America. They have undergone so many splits and changes that it would require a weekly edition of any book to keep pace with them. The temptations of Hollywood and musical comedy have thinned the ranks of the well-known dancers ; others, mainly Americans, have taken their places, till Russian Ballet, as we know it, has become Russo-American Ballet, which may in time bring interesting results. America, with its rich mixed cultures, is a fine field for ballet, if enthusiasm can be checked by a respect for tradition. Our own Markova and Dolin have remained magnificently true to their traditions, and no classical dancer since Pavlova has gained such a position as Markova. Long may the purity of her art flourish.

Two choreographers known to us here as beginners have made outstanding reputations : Anthony Tudor and Agnes de Mille ; the famous Russians seem to have added little to theirs. This and the increasingly American composition of the companies points to the end of the *émigré ballet russe* that we have known since the days of Diaghileff, and that gave us both the love and the practice of the art.

An epoch ended with the death in America (1943) of Fokine. He was the first modernist in ballet, though we think of him

## BALLET

benefit, leaving behind Helen Kirsova and Édouard Borovai who have formed their own Australian companies, an important event in an essentially musical and artistic community breeds such magnificent physical specimens.

Never has the outlook for creative ballet in Britain and Commonwealth seemed brighter ; the method has been established, the public is there, a new body, C.E.M.A., holds a winning brief for the State and forms the ideal British compromise halfway between State control and indifference. In ten years time the chapter on the British effort in this work will have grown beyond all recognition.

## ILLUSTRATED GLOSSARY OF SOME COMMON TERMS

*Adagio* signifies the "high spot" of the ballet, when the *ballerina*, assisted by her partner, displays her grace and virtuosity.



It is the *aria* of opera. It is a slow movement stressing balance.

*Arabesque*. There are a number of different *arabesques*. Basically it is the position of the body on one leg with the other extended behind, one arm in front and the other behind, forming the longest line that can be made from finger-tips to toes. The

graceful, sweeping line along the back contrasts with, and is accentuated by, the angle formed by the legs. (See illustration above.)

*Attack*. The method of presentation, the deliberation behind the performance of the steps.

*Attitude*. Carlo Blasis finished a pirouette in the pose of Gian Bologna's famous Mercury. There are a number of possible attitudes. (See illustration below.)

*Balletomane* is a word first used in Russia to signify the man who never missed a single performance, sitting in the front-row seats, which were almost impossible to obtain without good fortune or influence, being often handed down from father to son. The *balletomane* was usually a staunch conservative and a fierce partisan. After the performance he would adjourn to a café, meet the dancers, and discuss the ballets until the early hours. He was as mad as anyone with a hobby, but well-informed, a mine of history and tradition, and a connoisseur of technique.

Today the word might be translated by "ballet fan." Anyone who



visits the ballet a few times and knows a dancer calls him a *balletomane*. There are also near-lunatics with all enthusiasm but little of the knowledge of the Russ *balletomane*, who cause a certain amount of damage : a great deal of merriment. The present writer was responsible for loosing the word on the English language and coining *balletomania* to describe the particular disease, & has suffered for it in many ways, but has no wish to be cur *Barre*. A rod running round the walls of a dance-studio wh the pupils hold during their first exercises and while they being placed. It steadies them, taking the place of partner's hand.

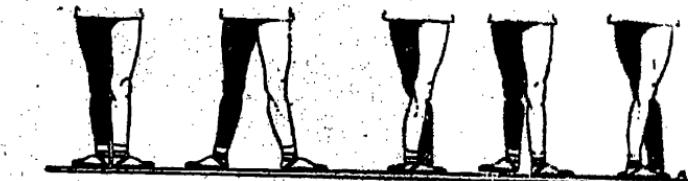
*Centre Practice*. The second half of the ballet class, in wh the *barre* is not used for support.

*Divertissement*. An entertainment made up of a series of c connected dances, usually a hopeless muddle; cf. *suite danses*.

*Elevation*. Dancing in the air, *la grâce sautée*, as opposed *terre-à-terre* dancing. E vation came in with t shortening of the skirt. The importance is not mere the height reached—this mu depend on the time allow by the music—but the gent ness of the landing. A loutish will destroy all illusio of flying.

*Enchaînement* is the sequence of steps ; a phrase in the poem th is a dance.

*Entrechat*. A jump during which the feet change their positio with regard to one another four, six, eight times, and, as freak stunt, ten. (See illustration above.)



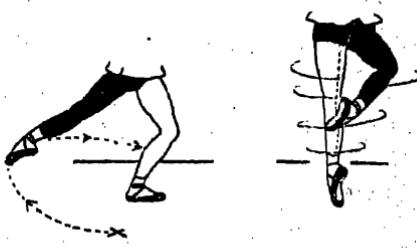
## GLOSSARY

**Five Positions.** The basic positions of the feet from which all movements start and in which all movements end. (See illustration, p. 168.)

The arms and the head also have their positions.

**Fouetté.** Without qualification this means a turn on one leg,

accompanied by a whipping motion of the other. A trick that is popular and often acquired by those with no knowledge of dancing, though to many it seems the ultimate aim. Many recent ballets call for multiple *fouettés*. (See illustration above.)



**Movements in Dancing.** There are seven types of movement:

*Plier* (to bend), *Etendre* (to stretch), *Relever* (to raise), *Glisser* (to slide), *Sauter* (to jump), *Elancer* (to dart), *Tourner* (to turn).

**as.** A step of which there is an infinite variety, which may either be slid, beaten, turned, or jumped.

They have such attractive names as: *Assemblés*, *Coupés*, *Gargouillades*, *Pas de Chat*, *Pas de Cheval*, etc., etc., that are descriptive either of their type or origin. I have here described the more obvious ones, *Entrechat*, *Fouetté*, and *Pas de Bourrée*.

The spectator will soon learn to identify them; if he doesn't, no matter; but he must never let the fascination of technique occupy too great a role in his interests. The dancer must learn them until they are second nature and can be rendered expressively.

**s de Bourrée.** Progression on the points by a sequence of very small, even steps; one of the most beautiful effects in ballet, suggestive of gliding. *The Dying Swan* is largely composed of the *pas de bourrée*.

**ouette.** A complete turn of the body accomplished on one leg. There are a variety of pirouettes.

**id de Jambes.** (See illustration, p. 170.)

**te de Danses.** A series of dances connected by mood and

## BALLET

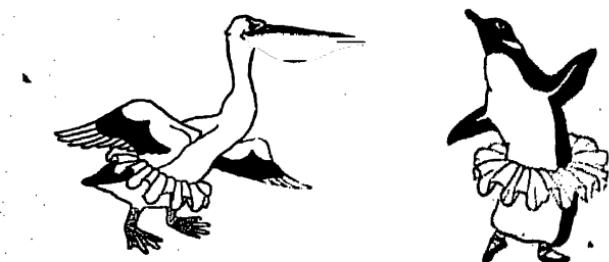
music, but not by theme, e.g. *Aurora's Wedding*, *Sylphides*, *Cimarosiana*, *Façade*.

*Sur les Pointes.* On the tips of the toes; an incident in ballet used either to give an illusion of flight or of conquest or to support weight or to facilitate turns by lessening the resistance. Was first introduced, far as we know, at the time of Tagli. Only one part of ballet technique, under normal circumstances neither difficult nor painful to acquire. In many cases it comes naturally: to Cossacks, for instance, who can rise on their points without blocking their shoes. Certain shoes contain metal blocks

but apart from the noise these make, they are clumsy and unnecessary. Most dancers darn the tips of their slippers to get a better grip of the floor and for economy's sake. Never use toe-dancing as the equivalent of ballet dancing; it is entirely inaccurate. Ballet dancing existed before the use of points, and exists without their use.

The foot can be *à terre* (on the ground), *à quart* (slightly off the ground), *sur la demi-pointe*, *à trois quarts*.

*Tour en l'Air.* A complete aerial turn of the body.



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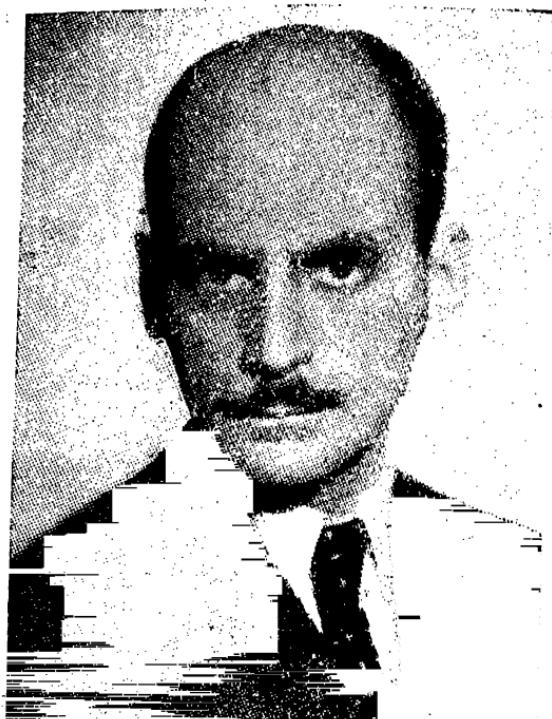
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# The Latest Pelicans



Seymour

#### THE AUTHOR

ARNOLD HASKELL says he was "born interested" in the ballet. The great love for the dance, which has made him the foremost critic in the world today, started when as a small boy he used to save his pocket money towards seeing performances. Since then he has seen ballets danced throughout the world.

Haskell was born in London and educated at Cambridge. He learnt dancing in order to "know what he was talking about." Has played a prominent part in establishing British Ballet; is responsible for the introduction of a new word into the English language—Balletomania, an apt description of "ballet fever." Was co-founder of the Camargo Society in 1930, and founder and trustee of the Vic-Wells Ballet Fund in 1936.

He worked for five years on the Editorial staff of a London publishing firm. Has lectured all over the world; was critic for *The Daily Telegraph*; is the author of numerous books on ballet and also of *The Sculptor Speaks*, which describes the work of Epstein, and several books on Australia, including *Waltzing Matilda*.

## **PELICAN BOOKS**

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### **VISION AND DESIGN**

**BY ROGER FRY**

#### **PUBLISHER'S NOTE**

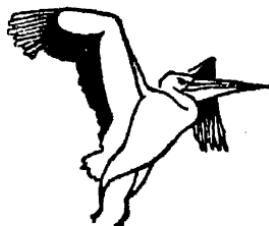
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PELICAN BOOKS

# VISION AND DESIGN

BY

ROGER FRY



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## PREFACE

This book contains a selection from my writings on Art extending over a period of twenty years. Some essays have never before been published in England; and I have also added a good deal of new matter and made slight corrections throughout. In the laborious work of hunting up lost and forgotten publications, and in the work of selection, revision, and arrangement I owe everything to Mr. R. R. Tatlock's devoted and patient labour.

R. F.

DEDICATED

TO

MY SISTER MARGERY

WITHOUT WHOSE GENTLE BUT PERSISTENT PRESSURE  
THIS BOOK WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN MADE

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# VISION AND DESIGN

## ART AND LIFE<sup>1</sup>

WHEN we look at ancient works of art we habitually treat them not merely as objects of æsthetic enjoyment but also as successive deposits of the human imagination. It is indeed this view of works of art as crystallised history that accounts for much of the interest felt in ancient art by those who have but little æsthetic feeling and who find nothing to interest them in the work of their contemporaries, where the historical motive is lacking, and they are left face to face with bare æsthetic values.

I once knew an old gentleman who had retired from his city office to a country house—a fussy, feeble, little being, who had cut no great figure in life. He had built himself a house which was preternaturally hideous; his taste was deplorable and his manners indifferent; but he had a dream, the dream of himself as an exquisite and refined intellectual dandy living in a society of elegant frivolity. To realise this dream he had spent large sums in buying up every scrap of eighteenth-century French furniture which he could lay hands on. These he stored in an immense upper floor in his house, which was always locked except when he went up to indulge in his dream and to become for a time a courtier at Versailles doing homage on the du Barry, who toilet-tables and whatnots were strewn pell-mell about the room without order or effect of any kind. Such an extreme instance of the historical way of looking at works of art. For this old gentleman, as for how

<sup>1</sup> From notes of a lecture given to the Fabian Society, 1917.

many an American millionaire, art was merely a help to an imagined dream life.

To many people then it seems an easy thing to pass thus directly from the work of art to the life of the time which produced it. We all in fact weave an imagined Middle Ages around the parish church and an imagined Renaissance haunts us in the college courts of Oxford and Cambridge. We don't, I fancy, stop to consider very closely how true the imagined life is: we are satisfied with the prospect of another sort of life which we might have lived, which we often think we might have preferred to our actual life. We don't stop to consider much how far the pictured past corresponds to any reality, certainly not to consider what proportion of the whole reality of the past life gets itself embalmed in this way in works of art. Thus we picture our Middle Ages as almost entirely occupied with religion and war, our Renaissance as occupied in learning, and our eighteenth century as occupied in gallantry and wit. Whereas, as a matter of fact, all of these things were going on all the time while the art of each period has for some reason been mainly taken up with the expression of one or another activity. There is indeed a certain danger in accepting too naively the general atmosphere—the ethos, which the works of art of a period exhale. Thus when we look at the thirteenth-century sculpture of Chartres or Beauvais we feel at once the expression of a peculiar gracious piety, a smiling and gay devoutness which we are tempted to take for the prevailing mood of the time—and which we perhaps associate with the revelation of just such a type of character in S. Francis of Assisi. A study of Salimbeni's chronicle with its interminable record of squalid avarice and meanness, or of the fierce brutalities of Dante's Inferno is a necessary corrective of such a pleasant dream.

It would seem then that the correspondence between art and life which we so habitually assume is not at

all constant and requires much correction before it can be trusted. Let us approach the same question from another point and see what result we obtain. Let us consider the great revolutions in art and the revolutions in life and see if they coincide. And here let me try to say what I mean by life as contrasted with art. I mean the general intellectual and instinctive reaction to their surroundings of those men of any period whose lives rise to complete self-consciousness. Their view of the universe as a whole and their conception of their relations to their kind. Of course their conception of the nature and function of art will itself be one of the most varying aspects of life and may in any particular period profoundly modify the correspondence of art to life.

Perhaps the greatest revolution in life that we know of at all intimately was that which effected the change from Paganism to Christianity. That this was no mere accident is evident from the fact that Christianity was only one of many competing religions, all of which represented a closely similar direction of thought and feeling. Any one of these would have produced practically the same effect, that of focusing men's minds on the spiritual life as opposed to the material life which had preoccupied them for so long. One cannot doubt then that here was a change which denoted a long prepared and inevitable readjustment of men's attitude to their universe. Now the art of the Roman Empire showed no trace whatever of this influence; it went on with precisely the same motives and principles which had satisfied Paganism. The subjects changed and became mainly Christian, but the treatment was so exactly similar that it requires more than a cursory glance to say if the figure on a sarcophagus is Christ or Orpheus, Moses or Æsculapius.

The next great turning-point in history is that which marks the triumph of the forces of reaction towards the close of the twelfth century—a reaction which

destroyed the promising hopes of freedom of thought and manners which make the twelfth century appear as a foretaste of modern enlightenment. Here undoubtedly the change in life corresponds very closely with a great change in art—the change from the Romanesque to the Gothic, and at first sight we might suppose a causal connection between the two. But when we consider the nature of the changes in the two sequences, this becomes very doubtful. For whereas in the life of the Middle Ages the change was one of reaction—the sharp repression by the reactionary forces of a gradual growth of freedom—the change in art is merely the efflorescence of certain long prepared and anticipated effects. The forms of Gothic architecture were merely the answer to certain engineering problems which had long occupied the inventive ingenuity of twelfth-century architects, while in the figurative arts the change merely showed a new self-confidence in the rendering of the human figure, a newly developed mastery in the handling of material. In short, the change in art was in the opposite direction to that in life. Whereas in life the direction of movement was sharply bent backwards, in art the direction followed on in a continuous straight line.

It is true that in one small particular the reaction did have a direct effect on art. The preaching of S. Bernard of Clairvaux did impose on the architects who worked for the Cistercian order a peculiar architectural hypocrisy. They were bound by his traditional influence to make their churches have an appearance of extreme simplicity and austerity, but they wanted nevertheless to make them as magnificent and imposing as possible. The result was a peculiar style of ostentatious simplicity. Paray le Monial is the only church left standing in which this curious and, in point of fact, depressing evidence of the direct influence of the religious on art is to be seen, and, as a curiosity in

psychological expression, it is well worth a visit. For the rest the movement of art went on entirely unaffected by the new orientation of thought.

We come now to the Renaissance, and here for the first time in our survey we may, I think, safely admit a true correspondence between the change in life and the change in art. The change in life, if one may generalise on such a vast subject, was towards the recognition of the rights of the individual, towards complete self-realisation and the recognition of the objective reality of the material universe which implied the whole scientific attitude—and in both these things the exemplar which men put before themselves was the civilisation of Greece and Rome. In art the change went *pari passu* with the change in life, each assisting and directing the other—the first men of science were artists like Brunelleschi, Ucello, Piero della Francesca and Leonardo da Vinci. The study of classical literature was followed in strict connection with the study of classical canons of art, and the greater sense of individual importance found its expression in the new naturalism which made portraiture in the modern sense possible.

For once then art and the other functions of the human spirit found themselves in perfect harmony and direct alliance, and to that harmony we may attribute much of the intensity and self-assurance of the work of the great Renaissance artists. It is one of the rarest of good fortunes for an artist to find himself actually understood and appreciated by the mass of his educated contemporaries, and not only that, but moving alongside of and in step with them towards a similar goal.

The Catholic reaction retarded and impeded the main movement of Renaissance thought, but it did not really succeed either in suppressing it or changing the main direction of its current. In art it undoubtedly had some direct effect, it created a new kind of insincerity of expression, a florid and sentimental religiosity

—a new variety of bad taste, the rhetorical and over-emphatic. And I suspect that art was already prepared for this step by a certain exhaustion of the impulsive energy of the Renaissance—so that here too we may admit a correspondence.

The seventeenth century shows us no violent change in life, but rather the gradual working out of the principles implicit in the Renaissance and the Catholic reaction. But here we come to another curious want of correspondence between art and life, for in art we have a violent revolution, followed by a bitter internecine struggle among artists. This revolution was inaugurated by Caravaggio, who first discovered the surprising emotional possibilities of chiaroscuro and who combined with this a new idea of realism—realism in the modern sense, viz., the literal acceptance of what is coarse, common, squalid or undistinguished in life—realism in the sense of the novelists of Zola's time. To Caravaggio's influence we might trace not only a great deal of Rembrandt's art but the whole of that movement in favour of the extravagantly impressive and picturesque, which culminated in the romantic movement of the nineteenth century. Here, then, is another surprising want of correspondence between art and life.

In the eighteenth century we get a curious phenomenon. Art goes to court, identifies itself closely with a small aristocratic clique, becomes the exponent of their manners and their tastes. It becomes a luxury. It is no longer in the main stream of spiritual and intellectual effort, and this seclusion of art may account for the fact that the next great change in life—the French Revolution and all its accompanying intellectual ferment—finds no serious correspondence in art. We get a change, it is true; the French Republicans believed <sup>that</sup> they were the counterpart of the Romans, and so David invents for them that peculiarly distressing type of ancient Roman—always in heroic attitudes, always

immaculate, spotless and with a highly polished 'Mme. Tussaud' surface. By-the-by, I was almost forgetting that we do owe Mme. Tussaud to the French Revolution. But the real movement of art in quite other directions—David—lay in the gradual unfolding of the Romanticist conception of the world—a world of violent emotional effects, of picturesque accidents, of wild nature, and this was a long prepared reaction from the complacent sophistication of eighteenth-century life. It is possible that one may associate this with the general state of mind that produced the Revolution, since both were a revolt against the established order of the eighteenth century; but curiously enough it found its chief ally in the reaction which followed the Revolution, in the neo-Christianism of Chateaubriand and the new sentimental respect for the age of faith—which, incidentally, appeared so much more picturesque than the age of reason.

It would be interesting at this point to consider how far during the nineteenth century reactionary political and religious thought was inspired primarily by aesthetic considerations—a curious instance of the counter-influence of art on life might perhaps be discovered in the devotees of the Oxford Movement. But this would take us too far afield.

The foregoing violently foreshortened view of history and art will show, I hope, that the usual assumption of a direct and decisive connection between life and art is by no means correct. It may, I hope, give pause to those numerous people who have already promised themselves a great new art as a result of the present war, though perhaps it is as well to let them enjoy it in anticipation, since it is, I fancy, the only way in which they are likely to enjoy a great art of any kind. What this survey suggests to me is that if we consider this special spiritual activity of art we find it no doubt open at times to influences from life, but in the main

self-contained—we find the rhythmic sequence determined much more by its own internal forces—and by the readjustment within it, of its elements—than by external forces. I admit, of course, that it is always conditioned more or less by external changes, but these are rather conditions of its expression than directive influences. I also admit that certain conditions of the rhythms of life and of art coincide with great effect on both; but in the main two rhythms are distinct, and as often as not even antagonistic.

We have, I hope, gained some experience with regard to handle the real subject of my inquiry, the relation of the modern movement in art to life. To understand it we must go back to the impressionist movement which dates from about 1870. The artists who called themselves impressionists combined two distinct ideals. On the one hand they upheld, more categorically than ever before, the complete detachment of the artist's vision from the values imposed on vision by everyday life—they claimed, as Whistler did in his "10 o'clock lecture," to be pure artists. On the other hand a group of them used this freedom for the quasi-scientific description of new effects of atmospheric colour and atmospheric perspective, thereby endowing painting with a new series of colour harmonies, or at least of harmonies which had not been cultivated by European painters for many hundreds of years. They did more than this—the effects thus explored were completely unfamiliar to the ordinary man, whose vision is limited to the mere recognition of objects with a view to their uses of everyday life. He was forced, in looking at their pictures, to accept as artistic representations something very remote from all his previous expectations; thereby he also acquired in time a new tolerance in making judgments on works of art, a tolerance which was destined to bear a still further strain in succeeding developments.

As against these great advantages which art owes to impressionism we must set the fact that the pseudo-scientific and analytic method of these painters forced artists to accept pictures which lacked design and formal co-ordination to a degree which had never before been permitted. They, or rather some of them, reduced the artistic vision to a continuous patchwork or mosaic of coloured patches without architectural framework or structural coherence. In this, impressionism marked the climax of a movement which had been going on more or less steadily from the thirteenth century—the tendency to approximate the forms of art more and more exactly to the representation of the totality of appearance. When once representation had been pushed to this point where further development was impossible, it was inevitable that artists should turn round and question the validity of the fundamental assumption that art aimed at representation; and the moment the question was fairly posed it became clear that the pseudo-scientific assumption that fidelity to appearance was the measure of art had no logical foundation. From that moment on it became evident that art had arrived at a critical point, and that the greatest revolution in art that had taken place since Græco-Roman impressionism became converted into Byzantine formalism was inevitable. It was this revolution that Cézanne inaugurated and that Gauguin and van Gogh continued. There is no need here to give in detail the characteristics of this new movement: they are sufficiently familiar. But we may summarise them as the re-establishment of purely æsthetic criteria in place of the criterion of conformity to appearance—the rediscovery of the principles of structural design and harmony.

The new movement has also led to a new canon of criticism, and this has changed our attitude to the arts of other times and countries. So long as representation was regarded as the end of art, the skill of the artist

self-contained—we find the rhythmic sequences of change determined much more by its own internal forces—and by the readjustment within it, of its own elements—than by external forces. I admit, of course, that it is always conditioned more or less by economic changes, but these are rather conditions of its existence at all than directive influences. I also admit that under certain conditions the rhythms of life and of art may coincide with great effect on both; but in the main the two rhythms are distinct, and as often as not play against each other.

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and his proficiency in this particular feat of representation was regarded with an admiration which was mainly non-aesthetic. With the new indifference to representation we have become much less interested in skill and not at all interested in knowledge. We thus no longer cut off from a great deal of barbaric and primitive art the very meaning of which escape the understanding of those who demanded a certain standard of skill in representation before they could give serious consideration to a work of art. In general the effect of the movement has been to render the artist intensely conscious of the aesthetic unity of a work of art, but singularly naïve and simple as regards other considerations.

It remains to be considered whether the life of the past fifty years has shown any such violent reorientation as we have found in the history of modern art. If I look back to the days of Herbert Spencer and Huxley what changes are there in the general tendencies of life? The main ideas of rationalism seem to me to have steadily made way—there have been minor countervolts and revolutions, it is true, but the main current of active thought has surely moved steadily along the line already laid down. I mean that the scientific attitude is more and more widely accepted. The protests of organised religion and of various mysticisms seem to grow gradually weaker and to carry less weight. Hardly any writers or thinkers of first-rate calibre now appeal in the reactionary camp. I see, in short, no big change in direction, no evident revulsion of feeling.

None the less I suppose that a Spencer would be impossible now, and that the materialism of to-day is recognisably different from the materialism of Spencer. It would be very much less naïvely self-confident. It would admit far greater difficulties in presenting its picture of the universe than would have occurred to Spencer. The fact is that scepticism has turned on itself

and has gone behind a great many of the axioms that seemed self-evident to the earlier rationalists. I do not see that it has at any point threatened the superstructure of the rationalist position, but it has led us to recognise the necessity of a continual revision and reconstruction of these data. Rationalism has become less arrogant and less narrow in its vision. And this is partly due also to the adventure of the scientific spirit into new regions. I refer to all that immense body of study and speculation which starts from Robertson Smith's "Religion of the Israelites." The discovery of natural law in what seemed to earlier rationalists the chaotic fancies and caprices of the human imagination. The assumption that man is a mainly rational animal has given place to the discovery that he is, like other animals, mainly instinctive. This modifies immensely the attitude of the rationalist—it gives him a new charity and a new tolerance. What seemed like the wilful follies of mad or wicked men to the earlier rationalists are now seen to be inevitable responses to fundamental instinctive needs. By observing mankind the man of science has lost his contempt for him. Now this I think has had an important bearing on the new movement in art. In the first place I find something analogous in the new orientation of scientific and artistic endeavour. Science has turned its instruments in on human nature and begun to investigate its fundamental needs, and art has also turned its vision inwards, has begun to work upon the fundamental necessities of man's æsthetic functions.

But besides this analogy, which may be merely accidental and not causal, I think there can be little doubt that the new scientific development—for it is in no sense a revolution—has modified men's attitude to art. To Herbert Spencer, religion was primitive fear of the unknown and art was sexual attraction—he must have contemplated with perfect equanimity almost with satisfaction, a world in which both these

and his proficiency in this particular feat of representation was regarded with an admiration which was in fact mainly non-aesthetic. With the new indifference to representation we have become much less interested in skill and not at all interested in knowledge. We are thus no longer cut off from a great deal of barbaric and primitive art the very meaning of which escaped the understanding of those who demanded a certain standard of skill in representation before they could give serious consideration to a work of art. In general the effect of the movement has been to render the artist intensely conscious of the aesthetic unity of the work of art, but singularly naïve and simple as regards other considerations.

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functions would disappear. I suppose that the scientific man of to-day would be much more ready to admit not only the necessity but the great importance of æsthetic feeling for the spiritual existence of man. The general conception of life in the mid-nineteenth century ruled out as noxious, or at best, a useless frivolity, and above all as a mere survival of more primitive stages of evolution.

On the other hand, the artist of the new movement is moving into a sphere more and more remote from that of the ordinary man. In proportion as art becomes purer the number of people to whom it appeals gets less. It cuts out all the romantic overtones of life which are the usual bait by which men are induced to accept a work of art. It appeals only to the æsthetic sensibility and that in most men is comparatively weak.

In the modern movement in art, then, as in so many cases in past history, the revolution in art seems to be out of all proportion to any corresponding change in life as a whole. It seems to find its sources, if at all, in what at present seem like minor movements. Whether the difference between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will in retrospect seem as great in life as they already do in art I cannot guess—at least it is curious to note how much more conscious we are of the change in art than we are of the general change in thought and feeling.

### AN ESSAY IN AESTHETICS<sup>1</sup>

A CERTAIN painter, not without some reputation at the present day, once wrote a little book on the art he practises, in which he gave a definition of that art so succinct that I take it as a point of departure for this essay.

“The art of painting,” says that eminent authority, “is the art of imitating solid objects upon a flat surface by means of pigments.” It is delightfully simple, but

<sup>1</sup> New Quarterly, 1909.

prompted the question—Is that all? And, if so, what a deal of unnecessary fuss has been made about it. Now, it is useless to deny that our modern writer has some very respectable authorities behind him. Plato, indeed, gave a very similar account of the affair, and himself at the question—*is it then worth while?* And, being stuporously and relentlessly logical, he decided that was not worth while, and proceeded to turn the artists out of his ideal republic. For all that, the world has continued obstinately to consider that painting was worth while, and though, indeed, it has never quite made up its mind as to what, exactly, the graphic arts did for it, it has persisted in honouring and admiring its painters.

Can we arrive at any conclusions as to the nature of the graphic arts, which will at all explain our feelings about them, which will at least put them into some kind of relation with the other arts, and not leave us in the extreme perplexity, engendered by any theory of mere imitation? For, I suppose, it must be admitted that if imitation is the sole purpose of the graphic arts, it is surprising that the works of such arts are ever looked upon as more than curiosities, or ingenious toys, are ever taken seriously by grown-up people. Moreover, it will be surprising that they have no recognisable affinity with other arts, such as music or architecture, in which the imitation of actual objects is a negligible quantity. To form such conclusions is the aim I have put before myself in this essay. Even if the results are not decisive, the inquiry may lead us to a view of the graphic arts that will not be altogether unfruitful.

I must begin with some elementary psychology, with consideration of the nature of instincts. A great many objects in the world, when presented to our senses, set in motion a complex nervous machinery, which ends in some instinctive appropriate action. We see a wild bull in a field; quite without our conscious inter-

## VISION AND DESIGN

ference a nervous process goes on, which, unless you interfere forcibly, ends in the appropriate reaction of flight. The nervous mechanism which results in flight causes a certain state of consciousness, which we call the emotion of fear. The whole of animal life, and great part of human life, is made up of these instinctive reactions to sensible objects, and their accompanying emotions. But man has the peculiar faculty of calling up again in his mind the echo of past experiences of this kind, of going over it again, "in imagination" as we say. He has, therefore, the possibility of a double life; one the actual life, the other the imaginative life. Between these two lives there is this great distinction, that in the actual life the processes of natural selection have brought it about that the instinctive reaction, such, for instance, as flight from danger, shall be the important part of the whole process, and it is towards this that the man bends his whole conscious endeavour. But in the imaginative life no such action is necessary, and, therefore, the whole consciousness may be focused upon the perceptive and the emotional aspects of the experience. In this way we get, in the imaginative life, a different set of values, and a different kind of perception.

We can get a curious side glimpse of the nature of this imaginative life from the cinematograph. This resembles actual life in almost every respect, except that what the psychologists call the conative part of our reaction to sensations, that is to say, the appropriate resultant action is cut off. If, in a cinematograph, we see a runaway horse and cart, we do not have to think either of getting out of the way or heroically interposing ourselves. The result is that in the first place we *see* the event much more clearly; see a number of quite interesting but irrelevant things, which in real life could not struggle into our consciousness, bent, as it would be, entirely upon the problem of our appro-

priate reaction. I remember seeing in a cinematograph the arrival of a train at a foreign station and the people descending from the carriages; there was no platform, and to my intense surprise I saw several people turn right round after reaching the ground, as though to orientate themselves; an almost ridiculous performance, which I had never noticed in all the many hundred occasions on which such a scene had passed before my eyes in real life. The fact being that at a station one is never really a spectator of events, but an actor engaged in the drama of luggage or prospective seats, and one actually sees only so much as may help to the appropriate action.

In the second place, with regard to the visions of the cinematograph, one notices that whatever emotions are aroused by them, though they are likely to be weaker than those of ordinary life, are presented more clearly to the consciousness. If the scene presented be one of an accident, our pity and horror, though weak, since we know that no one is really hurt, are felt quite purely, since they cannot, as they would in life, pass at once into actions of assistance.

A somewhat similar effect to that of the cinematograph can be obtained by watching a mirror in which a street scene is reflected. If we look at the street itself we are almost sure to adjust ourselves in some way to its actual existence. We recognise an acquaintance, and wonder why he looks so dejected this morning, or become interested in a new fashion in hats—the moment we do that the spell is broken, we are reacting to life itself in however slight a degree, but, in the mirror, it is easier to abstract ourselves completely, and look upon the changing scene as a whole. It then, at once, takes on the visionary quality, and we become true spectators, not selecting what we will see, but seeing everything equally, and thereby we come to notice a number of appearances and relations

ference a nervous process goes on, which, unless we interfere forcibly, ends in the appropriate reaction of flight. The nervous mechanism which results in flight causes a certain state of consciousness, which we call the emotion of fear. The whole of animal life, and a great part of human life, is made up of these instinctive reactions to sensible objects, and their accompanying emotions. But man has the peculiar faculty of calling up again in his mind the echo of past experiences of this kind, of going over it again, "in imagination" as we say. He has, therefore, the possibility of a double life; one the actual life, the other the imaginative life. Between these two lives there is this great distinction, that in the actual life the processes of natural selection have brought it about that the instinctive reaction, such, for instance, as flight from danger, shall be the important part of the whole process, and it is towards this that the man bends his whole conscious endeavour. But in the imaginative life no such action is necessary, and, therefore, the whole consciousness may be focused upon the perceptive and the emotional aspects of the experience. In this way we get, in the imaginative life, a different set of values, and a different kind of perception.

We can get a curious side glimpse of the nature of this imaginative life from the cinematograph. This resembles actual life in almost every respect, except that what the psychologists call the conative part of our reaction to sensations, that is to say, the appropriate resultant action is cut off. If, in a cinematograph, we see a runaway horse and cart, we do not have to think either of getting out of the way or heroically interposing ourselves. The result is that in the first place we *see* the event much more clearly; see a number of quite interesting but irrelevant things, which in real life could not struggle into our consciousness, bent, as it would be, entirely upon the problem of our appro-

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of appearances, which would have escaped our notice before, owing to that perpetual economising by selection of what impressions we will assimilate, which in life we perform by unconscious processes. The frame of the mirror, then, does to some extent turn the reflected scene from one that belongs to our actual life into one that belongs rather to the imaginative life. The frame of the mirror makes its surface into a very rudimentary work of art, since it helps us to attain to the artistic vision. For that is what, as you will already have guessed, I have been coming to all this time, namely that the work of art is intimately connected with the secondary imaginative life, which all men live to a greater or less extent.

That the graphic arts are the expression of the imaginative life rather than a copy of actual life might be guessed from observing children. Children, if left to themselves, never, I believe, copy what they see, never, as we say, "draw from nature," but express, with a delightful freedom and sincerity, the mental images which make up their own imaginative lives.

Art, then, is an expression and a stimulus of this imaginative life, which is separated from actual life by the absence of responsive action. Now this responsive action implies in actual life moral responsibility. In art we have no such moral responsibility—it presents a life freed from the binding necessities of our actual existence.

What then is the justification for this life of the imagination which all human beings live more or less fully? To the pure moralist, who accepts nothing but ethical values, in order to be justified, it must be shown not only *not* to hinder but actually to forward right action, otherwise it is not only useless but, since it absorbs our energies, positively harmful. To such a one two views are possible, one the Puritanical view at its narrowest, which regards the life of the

imagination as no better or worse than a life of sensual pleasure, and therefore entirely reprehensible. The other view is to argue that the imaginative life does subserve morality. And this is inevitably the view taken by moralists like Ruskin, to whom the imaginative life is yet an absolute necessity. It is a view which leads to some very hard special pleading, even to a self-deception which is in itself morally undesirable.

But here comes in the question of religion, for religion is also an affair of the imaginative life, and, though it claims to have a direct effect upon conduct, I do not suppose that the religious person if he were wise would justify religion entirely by its effect on morality, since that, historically speaking, has not been by any means uniformly advantageous. He would probably say that the religious experience was one which corresponded to certain spiritual capacities of human nature, the exercise of which is in itself good and desirable apart from their effect upon actual life. And so, too, I think the artist might if he chose take a mystical attitude, and declare that the fullness and completeness of the imaginative life he leads may correspond to an existence more real and more important than any that we know of in mortal life.

And in saying this, his appeal would find a sympathetic echo in most minds, for most people would, I think, say that the pleasures derived from art were of an altogether different character and more fundamental than merely sensual pleasures, that they did exercise some faculties which are felt to belong to whatever part of us there may be which is not entirely ephemeral and material.

It might even be that from this point of view we should rather justify actual life by its relation to the imaginative, justify nature by its likeness to art. I mean this, that since the imaginative life comes in the course of time to represent more or less what mankind feels to be the completest expression of its

own nature, the freest use of its innate capacities, the actual life may be explained and justified by its approximation here and there, however partially and inadequately, to that freer and fuller life.

Before leaving this question of the justification of art, let me put it in another way. The imaginative life of a people has very different levels at different times, and these levels do not always correspond with the general level of the morality of actual life. Thus in the thirteenth century we read of barbarity and cruelty which would shock even us; we may, I think, admit that our moral level, our general humanity is decidedly higher to-day, but the level of our imaginative life is incomparably lower; we are satisfied there with a grossness, a sheer barbarity and squalor which would have shocked the thirteenth century profoundly. Let us admit the moral gain gladly, but do we not also feel a loss; do we not feel that the average business man would be in every way a more admirable, more respectable being if his imaginative life were not so squalid and incoherent? And, if we admit any loss then, there is some function in human nature other than a purely ethical one, which is worthy of exercise.

Now the imaginative life has its own history both in the race and in the individual. In the individual life one of the first effects of freeing experience from the necessities of appropriate responsive action is to indulge recklessly the emotion of self-aggrandisement. The day-dreams of a child are filled with extravagant romances in which he is always the invincible hero. Music—which of all the arts supplies the strongest stimulus to the imaginative life and at the same time has the least power of controlling its direction—music, at certain stages of people's lives, has the effect merely of arousing in an almost absurd degree this egoistic elation, and Tolstoy appears to believe that this is its only possible effect. But with the teaching of experience

and the growth of character the imaginative life comes to respond to other instincts and to satisfy other desires, until, indeed, it reflects the highest aspirations and the deepest aversions of which human nature is capable.

In dreams and when under the influence of drugs the imaginative life passes out of our own control, and in such cases its experiences may be highly undesirable, but whenever it remains under our own control it must always be on the whole a desirable life. That is not to say that it is always pleasant, for it is pretty clear that mankind is so constituted as to desire much besides pleasure, and we shall meet among the great artists, the great exponents, that is, of the imaginative life, many to whom the merely pleasant is very rarely a part of what is desirable. But this desirability of the imaginative life does distinguish it very sharply from actual life, and this is the direct result of that first fundamental difference, its freedom from necessary external conditions. Art, then, is, if I am right, the chief organ of the imaginative life; it is by art that it is stimulated and controlled within us, and, as we have seen, the imaginative life is distinguished by the greater clearness of its perception, and the greater purity and freedom of its emotion.

First with regard to the greater clearness of perception. The needs of our actual life are so imperative, that the sense of vision becomes highly specialised in their service. With an admirable economy we learn to see only so much as is needful for our purposes; but this is in fact very little, just enough to recognise and identify each object or person; that done, they go into an entry in our mental catalogue and are no more really seen. In actual life the normal person really only reads the labels as it were on the objects around him and troubles no further. Almost all the things which are useful in any way put on more or less this cap of invisibility. It is only when an object exists

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in our lives for no other purpose than to be seen that we really look at it, as for instance at a China ornament or a precious stone, and towards such even the most normal person adopts to some extent the artistic attitude of pure vision abstracted from necessity.

Now this specialisation of vision goes so far that ordinary people have almost no idea of what things really look like, so that oddly enough the one standard that popular criticism applies to painting, namely, whether it is like nature or not, is one which most people are, by the whole tenor of their lives, prevented from applying properly. The only things they have ever really *looked* at being other pictures; the moment an artist who has looked at nature brings to them a clear report of something definitely seen by him, they are wildly indignant at its untruth to nature. This has happened so constantly in our own time that there is no need to prove it. One instance will suffice. Monet is an artist whose chief claim to recognition lies in the fact of his astonishing power of faithfully reproducing certain aspects of nature, but his really naive innocence and sincerity were taken by the public to be the most audacious humbug, and it required the teaching of men like Bastien-Lepage, who cleverly compromised between the truth and an accepted convention of what things looked like, to bring the world gradually round to admitting truths which a single walk in the country with purely unbiased vision would have established beyond doubt.

But though this clarified sense perception which we discover in the imaginative life is of great interest, and although it plays a larger part in the graphic arts than in any other, it might perhaps be doubted whether, interesting, curious, fascinating as it is, this aspect of the imaginative life would ever by itself make art of profound importance to mankind. But it is different, I think, with the emotional aspect. We have admitted

that the emotions of the imaginative are generally weaker than those of actual life. The picture of a saint being slowly flayed alive, revolting as it is, will not produce the same physical sensations of sickening disgust that a modern man would feel if he could assist at the actual event; but they have a compensating clearness of presentment to the consciousness. The more poignant emotions of actual life have, I think, a kind of numbing effect analogous to the paralysing influence of fear in some animals; but even if this experience be not generally admitted, all will admit that the need for responsive action hurries us along and prevents us from ever realising fully what the emotion is that we feel, from co-ordinating it perfectly with other states. In short, the motives we actually experience are too close to us to enable us to feel them clearly. They are in a sense unintelligible. In the imaginative life, on the contrary, we can both feel the emotion and watch it. When we are really moved at the theatre we are always both on the stage and in the auditorium.

Yet another point about the emotions of the imaginative life—since they require no responsive action we can give them a new valuation. In real life we must to some extent cultivate those emotions which lead to useful action, and we are bound to appraise emotions according to the resultant action. So that, for instance, the feelings of rivalry and emulation do get an encouragement which perhaps they scarcely deserve, whereas certain feelings which appear to have a high intrinsic value get almost no stimulus in actual life. For instance, those feelings to which the name of the cosmic emotion has been somewhat unhappily given find almost no place in life, but, since they seem to belong to certain very deep springs of our nature, do become of great importance in the arts.

Morality, then, appreciates emotion by the standard

of resultant action. Art appreciates emotion in a for itself.

This view of the essential importance in art of expression of the emotions is the basis of Tolstoy's marvellously original and yet perverse and even asperating book, "What is Art?" and I willing confess, while disagreeing with almost all his results how much I owe to him.

He gives an example of what he means by calling art the means of communicating emotions. He says let us suppose a boy to have been pursued in the forest by a bear. If he returns to the village and merely states that he was pursued by a bear and escaped, that is ordinary language, the means of communicating fact or ideas; but if he describes his state first of heedlessness, then of sudden alarm and terror as the bear appears, and finally of relief when he gets away, and describes this so that his hearers share his emotions then his description is a work of art.

Now in so far as the boy does this in order to urge the villagers to go out and kill the bear, though he may be using artistic methods, his speech is not a pure work of art; but if of a winter evening the boy relates his experience for the sake of the enjoyment of his adventure in retrospect, or better still, if he makes up the whole story for the sake of the imagined emotions, then his speech becomes a pure work of art. But Tolstoy takes the other view, and values the emotions aroused by art entirely for their reaction upon actual life, a view which he courageously maintains even when it leads him to condemn the whole of Michelangelo, Raphael and Titian, and most of Beethoven, not to mention nearly everything he himself has written, as bad or false art.

Such a view would, I think, give pause to any less heroic spirit. He would wonder whether mankind could have always been so radically wrong about

a function that, whatever its value be, is almost universal. And in point of fact he will have to find some other word to denote what we now call art. Nor does Tolstoy's theory even carry him safely through his own book, since, in his examples of morally desirable and therefore good art, he has to admit that these are to be found, for the most part, among works of inferior quality. Here, then, is at once the tacit admission that another standard than morality is applicable. We must therefore give up the attempt to judge the work of art by its reaction on life, and consider it as an expression of emotions regarded as ends in themselves. And this brings us back to the idea we had already arrived at, of art as the expression of the imaginative life.

If, then, an object of any kind is created by man not for use, for its fitness to actual life, but as an object of art, an object subserving the imaginative life, what will its qualities be? It must in the first place be adapted to that disinterested intensity of contemplation, which we have found to be the effect of cutting off the responsive action. It must be suited to that heightened power of perception which we found to result therefrom.

And the first quality that we demand in our sensations will be order, without which our sensations will be troubled and perplexed, and the other quality will be variety, without which they will not be fully stimulated.

It may be objected that many things in nature, such as flowers, possess these two qualities of order and variety in a high degree, and these objects do undoubtedly stimulate and satisfy that clear disinterested contemplation which is characteristic of the æsthetic attitude. But in our reaction to a work of art there is something more—there is the consciousness of purpose, the consciousness of a peculiar relation of sympathy with the man who made this thing in order to arouse precisely the sensations we experience. And

when we come to the higher works of art, where sensations are so arranged that they arouse in us deep emotions, this feeling of a special tie with the man who expressed them becomes very strong. We feel that he has expressed something which was latent in us all the time, but which we never realised, that he has revealed us to ourselves in revealing himself. And this recognition of purpose is, I believe, an essential part of the æsthetic judgment proper.

The perception of purposeful order and variety in an object gives us the feeling which we express by saying that it is beautiful, but when by means of sensations our emotions are aroused we demand purposeful order and variety in them also, and if this can only be brought about by the sacrifice of sensual beauty we willingly overlook its absence.

Thus, there is no excuse for a china pot being ugly, there is every reason why Rembrandt's and Degas' pictures should be, from the purely sensual point of view, supremely and magnificently ugly.

This, I think, will explain the apparent contradiction between two distinct uses of the word beauty, one for that which has sensuous charm, and one for the æsthetic approval of works of imaginative art where the objects presented to us are often of extreme ugliness. Beauty in the former sense belongs to works of art where only the perceptual aspect of the imaginative life is exercised, beauty in the second sense becomes as it were supersensual, and is concerned with the appropriateness and intensity of the emotions aroused. When these emotions are aroused in a way that satisfies fully the needs of the imaginative life we approve and delight in the sensations through which we enjoy that heightened experience because they possess purposeful order and variety in relation to those emotions.

One chief aspect of order in a work of art is unity; unity of some kind is necessary for our resful con-

temptation of the work of art as a whole, since if it lacks unity we cannot contemplate it in its entirety, but we shall pass outside it to other things necessary to complete its unity.

In a picture this unity is due to a balancing of the attractions of the eye about the central line of the picture. The result of this balance of attractions is that the eye rests willingly within the bounds of the picture. Dr. Denman Ross of Harvard University has made a most valuable study of the elementary considerations upon which this balance is based in his "Theory of Pure Design." He sums up his results in the formula that a composition is of value in proportion to the number of orderly connections which it displays.

Dr. Ross wisely restricts himself to the study of abstract and meaningless forms. The moment representation is introduced forms have an entirely new set of values. Thus a line which indicated the sudden bend of a head in a certain direction would have far more than its mere value as line in the composition because of the attraction which a marked gesture has for the eye. In almost all paintings this disturbance of the purely decorative values by reason of the representative effect takes place, and the problem becomes too complex for geometrical proof.

This merely decorative unity is, moreover, of very different degrees of intensity in different artists and in different periods. The necessity for a closely woven geometrical texture in the composition is much greater in heroic and monumental design than in genre pieces on a small scale.

It seems also probable that our appreciation of unity in pictorial design is of two kinds. We are so accustomed to consider only the unity which results from the balance of a number of attractions presented to the eye simultaneously in a framed picture that we forget the possibility of other pictorial forms.

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imaginative reaction to such an image is governed by our experience of mass in actual life.

The third element is space. The same-sized square on two pieces of paper can be made by very simple means to appear to represent either a cube two or three inches high, or a cube of hundreds of feet, and our reaction to it is proportionately changed.

The fourth element is that of light and shade. Our feelings towards the same object become totally different according as we see it strongly illuminated against a black background or dark against light.

A fifth element is that of colour. That this has a direct emotional effect is evident from such words as gay, dull, melancholy in relation to colour.

I would suggest the possibility of another element, though perhaps it is only a compound of mass and space: it is that of the inclination to the eye of a plane, whether it is impending over or leaning away from us.

Now it will be noticed that nearly all these emotional elements of design are connected with essential conditions of our physical existence: rhythm appeals to all the sensations which accompany muscular activity; mass to all the infinite adaptations to the force of gravity which we are forced to make; the spatial judgment is equally profound and universal in its application to life; our feeling about inclined planes is connected with our necessary judgments about the conformation of the earth itself; light again, is so necessary a condition of our existence that we become intensely sensitive to changes in its intensity. Colour is the only one of our elements which is not of critical or universal importance to life, and its emotional effect is neither so deep nor so clearly determined as the others. It will be seen, then, that the graphic arts arouse emotions in us by playing upon what one may call the overtones of some of our primary physical needs. They have, indeed, this great advantage over poetry, that they can

In certain Chinese paintings the length is so great that we cannot take in the whole picture at once, nor are we intended to do so. Sometimes a landscape is painted upon a roll of silk so long that we can only look at it in successive segments. As we unroll it at one end and roll it up at the other we traverse wide stretches of country, tracing, perhaps, all the vicissitudes of a river from its source to the sea, and yet, when this is well done, we have received a very keen impression of pictorial unity.

Such a successive unity is of course familiar to us in literature and music, and it plays its part in the graphic arts. It depends upon the forms being presented to us in such a sequence that each successive element is felt to have a fundamental and harmonious relation with that which preceded it. I suggest that in looking at drawings our sense of pictorial unity is largely of this nature; we feel, if the drawing be a good one, that each modulation of the line as our eye passes along it gives order and variety to our sensations. Such a drawing may be almost entirely lacking in the geometrical balance which we are accustomed to demand in paintings, and yet have, in a remarkable degree, unity.

Let us now see how the artist passes from the stage of merely gratifying our demand for sensuous order and variety to that where he arouses our emotions. I will call the various methods by which this is affected the emotional elements of design.

The first element is that of the rhythm of the line with which the forms are delineated.

The drawn line is the record of a gesture, and that gesture is modified by the artist's feeling which is thus communicated to us directly.

The second element is mass. When an object is so represented that we recognise it as having inertia, we feel its power of resisting movement, or communicating its own movement to other bodies, and our

appeal more directly and immediately to the emotional accompaniments of our bare physical existence.

If we represent these various elements in simple diagrammatic terms, this effect upon the emotions is, it must be confessed, very weak. Rhythm of line, for instance, is incomparably weaker in its stimulus of the muscular sense than is rhythm addressed to the ear in music, and such diagrams can at best arouse only faint ghost-like echoes of emotions of differing qualities; but when these emotional elements are combined with the presentation of natural appearances, above all with the appearance of the human body, we find that this effect is indefinitely heightened.

When, for instance, we look at Michelangelo's "Jeremiah," and realise the irresistible momentum his movements would have, we experience powerful sentiments of reverence and awe. Or when we look at Michelangelo's "Tondo" in the Uffizi, and find a group of figures so arranged that the planes have a sequence comparable in breadth and dignity to the mouldings of the earth mounting by clearly-felt gradations to an overtopping summit, innumerable instinctive reactions are brought into play.<sup>1</sup>

At this point the adversary (as Leonardo da Vinci calls him) is likely enough to retort, "You have abstracted from natural forms a number of so-called emotional elements which you yourself admit are very weak when stated with diagrammatic purity; you then put them back, with the help of Michelangelo, into the natural forms whence they were derived, and at once they have value, so that after all it appears that the natural forms contain these emotional elements ready made up for us, and all that art need do is to imitate Nature."

<sup>1</sup> Rodin is reported to have said, "A woman, a mountain, a horse—they are all the same thing; they are made on the same principles." That is to say, their forms, when viewed with the disinterested vision of the imaginative life, have similar emotional elements.

But, alas! Nature is heartlessly indifferent to the needs of the imaginative life; God causes His rain to fall upon the just and upon the unjust. The sun neglects to provide the appropriate limelight effect even upon a triumphant Napoleon or a dying Cæsar.<sup>1</sup> Assuredly we have no guarantee that in nature the emotional elements will be combined appropriately with the demands of the imaginative life, and it is, I think, the great occupation of the graphic arts to give us first of all order and variety in the sensuous plane, and then so to arrange the sensuous presentment of objects that the emotional elements are elicited with an order and appropriateness altogether beyond what Nature herself provides.

Let me sum up for a moment what I have said about the relation of art to Nature, which is, perhaps, the greatest stumbling-block to the understanding of the graphic arts.

I have admitted that there is beauty in Nature, that is to say, that certain objects constantly do, and perhaps any object may, compel us to regard it with that intense disinterested contemplation that belongs to the imaginative life, and which is impossible to the actual life of necessity and action; but that in objects created to arouse the æsthetic feeling we have an added consciousness of purpose on the part of the creator, that he made it on purpose not to be used but to be regarded and enjoyed; and that this feeling is characteristic of the æsthetic judgment proper.

When the artist passes from pure sensations to emotions aroused by means of sensations, he uses natural forms which, in themselves, are calculated to move our emotions, and he presents these in such a manner that the forms themselves generate in us emotional states, based upon the fundamental neces-

<sup>1</sup>I do not forget that at the death of Tennyson the writer in the *Daily Telegraph* averred that "level beams of the setting moon streamed in upon the face of the dying bard"; but then, after all, in its way the *Daily Telegraph* is a work of art.

sities of our physical and physiological nature. The artist's attitude to natural form is, therefore, infinitely various according to the emotions he wishes to arouse. He may require for his purpose the most complete representation of a figure, he may be intensely realistic, provided that his presentment, in spite of its closeness to natural appearance, disengages clearly for us the appropriate emotional elements. Or he may give us the merest suggestion of natural forms, and rely almost entirely upon the force and intensity of the emotional elements involved in his presentment.

We may, then, dispense once for all with the idea of likeness to Nature, of correctness or incorrectness as a test, and consider only whether the emotional elements inherent in natural form are adequately discovered, unless, indeed, the emotional idea depends at any point upon likeness, or completeness of representation.

### THE OTTOMAN AND THE WHATNOT<sup>1</sup>

SUCH were the outlandish names of the two great clans that marched under the flag of the Antimacassar to the resounding periods of Mr. Podsnap's rhetoric. For all the appearance of leisure, for all the absence of hustle, those were strenuous days. Respectability and "the young person" were perpetually menaced by inveterate human nature, and were always or nearly always just being saved as by a miracle. But in the end it was the boast of the Victorians that they had established a system of taboos almost as complicated and as all-pervading as that of the Ojibbeways or the Waramunga. The Ottoman, which seated two so conveniently, was liable to prove a traitor, but what the Ottoman risked could be saved by the Whatnot, with Tennyson and John Greenleaf Whittier to counsel

<sup>1</sup> *Athenæum*, 1919.

and assuage. One of the things they used to say in those days, quite loudly and distinctly, was: "Distance lends enchantment to the view." It seemed so appropriate at the frequent and admirably organised picnics that at last it was repeated too often, and the time came when, under pain of social degradation, it was forbidden to utter the hated words. But now that we are busy bringing back the Ottoman and the Whatnot from the garret and the servants' hall to the drawing-room, we may once more repeat the phrase with impunity, and indeed this article has no other purpose than to repeat once more (and with how new a relish !): "Distance lends enchantment to the view."

Also, with our passion for science and exact measurement, we shall wish to discover the exact distance at which enchantment begins. And this is easier than might be supposed; for any one who has lived long enough will have noticed that a certain distance lends a violent disgust to the view—that as we recede there comes a period of oblivion and total unconsciousness, to be succeeded when consciousness returns by the ecstasy, the nature of which we are considering.

I, alas ! can remember the time when the Ottoman and Whatnot still lingered in the drawing-rooms of the less fashionable and more conservative bourgeoisie; lingered despised, rejected, and merely awaiting their substitutes. I can remember the sham Chippendale and the sham old oak which replaced them. I can remember a still worse horror—a genuine modern style which as yet has no name, a period of black polished wood with spidery lines of conventional flowers incised in the wood and then gilt. These things must have belonged to the 'eighties—I think they went with the bustle; but as they are precisely at the distance where unconsciousness has set in, it is more difficult to me to write the history of this period than it would be to tell of the sequence of styles in the Tang dynasty. And now, having

watched the Whatnot disappear, I have the privilege of watching its resurrection. I have passed from disgust, through total forgetfulness, into the joys of retrospection.

Now my belief is that none of these feelings have anything to do with our æsthetic reactions to the objects as works of art. The odd thing about either real or would-be works of art, that is to say, about any works made with something beyond a purely utilitarian aim—the odd thing is that they can either affect our æsthetic sensibilities or they can become symbols of a particular way of life. In this aspect they affect our historical imagination through our social emotions. That the historical images they conjure up in us are probably false has very little to do with it; the point is that they exist for us, and exist for most people, far more vividly and poignantly than any possible æsthetic feelings. And somehow the works of each period come to stand for us as symbols of some particular and special aspect of life. A Limoges casket evokes the idea of a life of chivalrous adventure and romantic devotion; an Italian cassone gives one a life of intellectual ferment and Boccaccian freedom; before a Caffieri bronze or a Riesener bureau one imagines oneself an exquisite aristocrat proof against the deeper passions, and gifted with a sensuality so refined and a wit so ready that gallantry would be a sufficient occupation for a lifetime. Who ever, handling a Louis XV. tabatière, reflected how few of the friends of its original owner ever washed, and how many of them were marked with small-pox? The fun of these historical evocations is precisely in what they leave out.

And in order that this process of selection and elimination may take place, precise and detailed knowledge must have faded from the collective memory, the blurred but exquisite outlines of a generalisation have been established.

I have just got to this point with the Victorian

epoch. It has just got its vague and generalised *Stimmung*. We think as we look at Leech's drawings, or sit in a beadwork chair, of a life which was the perfect flower of bourgeoisie. The aristocracy with their odd irregular ways, the Meredith heroines and heroes, are away in the background; the Victorian life is of the upper bourgeoisie. It is immensely leisured, untroubled by social problems, unblushingly sentimental, impenitently unintellectual, and devoted to sport. The women are exquisitely trained to their social functions; they respond unfailingly to every sentimental appeal; they are beautifully ill-informed, and yet yearning for instruction; they have adorable tempers and are ever so mildly mischievous. The men can afford, without fear of impish criticism, to flaunt their whiskers in the sea breeze, and to expatriate on their contempt for everything that is not correct.

Here, I suppose, is something like the outline of that generalised historical fancy that by now emanates so fragrantly from the marble inlaid tables and the beadwork screens of the period. How charming and how false it is, one sees at once when one reflects that we imagine the Victorians for ever playing croquet without ever losing their tempers.

It is evident, then, that we have just arrived at the point where our ignorance of life in the Victorian period is such as to allow the incurable optimism of memory to build a quite peculiar little earthly paradise out of the boredom, the snobberies, the cruel repressions, the mean calculations and rapacious speculations of the mid-nineteenth century. Go a little later, and the imagination is hopelessly hampered by familiarity with the facts of life which the roseate mist has not yet begun to transmute. But let those of us who are hard at work collecting Victorian paper-weights, stuffed humming-birds and wax flowers reflect that our successors will be able to create quite as amusing and wonder-

ful interiors out of the black wood cabinets and "æsthetic" crewel-work of the 'eighties. They will not be able to do this until they have constructed the appropriate social picture, the outlines of which we cannot yet even dimly conceive. We have at this moment no inkling of the kind of lies they will invent about the 'eighties to amuse themselves; we only know that when the time comes the legend will have taken shape, and that, from that moment on, the objects of the time will have the property of emanation.

So far it has been unnecessary even to consider whether the objects of the Victorian period are works of art or not; all that is necessary is that they should have some margin of freedom from utility, some scope for the fancy of their creators. And the Victorian epoch is, I think, unusually rich in its capacity for emanation, for it was the great period of *fancy work*. As the age-long traditions of craftsmanship and structural design, which had lingered on from the Middle Ages, finally faded out under the impact of the new industrialism, the amateur stepped in, his brain teeming with fancies. Craftsmanship was dead, the craftsman replaced either by the machine or by a purely servile and mechanical human being, a man without tradition, without ideas of his own, who was ready to accomplish whatever caprices the amateur or the artist might set him to. It was an age of invention and experiment, an age of wildly irresponsible frivolity, curiosity and sentimentality. To gratify sentiment, nature was opposed to the hampering conventions of art; to gratify fatuous curiosity, the most improbable and ill-suited materials conceivable were used. What they call in France *le style coco* is exactly expressive of this. A drawing of a pheasant is coloured by cutting up little pieces of real pheasant's feathers and sticking them on in the appropriate places. Realistic flowers are made out of shells glued together, or, with less of the pleasant

shock of the unexpected, out of wax or spun glass. They experiment in colour, using the new results of chemistry boldly, greens from arsenic, magenta and maroons from coal-tar, with results sometimes happy, sometimes disastrous; but always we feel behind everything the capricious fancy of the amateur with his desire to contribute by some joke or conjuring trick to the social amenities. The general groundwork of design, so far as any tradition remains at all, is a kind of bastard baroque passing at times into a flimsy caricature of rococo, but almost always so overlaid and transfigured by the fancies of the amateur as to be hardly recognisable, and yet all, by now, so richly redolent of its social legend as to have become a genuine style.

There is reason enough, then, why we should amuse ourselves by collecting Victorian objects of art, or at least those of us who have the special social-historical sensibility highly developed. But so curiously intertwined are our emotions that we are always apt to put a wrong label on them, and the label "beauty" comes curiously handy for almost any of the more spiritual and disinterested feelings. So our collector is likely enough to ask us to admire his objects, not for their social emanations, but for their intrinsic æsthetic merit, which, to tell the truth, is far more problematical. Certain it is that the use of material at this period seems to be less discriminating, and the sense of quality feebler, than at any previous period of the world's history, at all events since Roman times—Pompeii, by-the-by, was a thoroughly Victorian city. The sense of design was also chaotically free from all the limitations of purpose and material, and I doubt if it attained to that perfect abstract sense of harmony which might justify any disregard of those conditions. No, on the whole it will be better to recognise fully how endearing, how fancy-free, how richly evocative

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## VISION AND DESIGN

the objects of the Victorian period than to trouble  
heads about their æsthetic value.

The discovery of Victorian art is due to a few enter-  
sing and original artists. In a future article I hope  
show why it is to the artist rather than to the collector  
t we always owe such discoveries, and also why  
ists are of all people the most indifferent to the  
hetic value of the objects they recommend to our  
niration.

## THE ARTIST'S VISION<sup>1</sup>

the preceding article I stated that artists always  
i the way in awakening a new admiration for for-  
ten and despised styles, and that in doing so they  
icipate both the archæologist and the collector.  
Iso suggested that they were of all people the least  
ed to report upon the æsthetic value of the objects  
y pressed upon us.

biologically speaking, art is a blasphemy. We were  
en our eyes to see things, not to look at them. Life  
es care that we all learn the lesson thoroughly, so  
t at a very early age we have acquired a very con-  
rable ignorance of visual appearances. We have  
ned the meaning-for-life of appearances so well  
t we understand them, as it were, in shorthand.  
e subtlest differences of appearance that have a  
ity value still continue to be appreciated, while large  
important visual characters, provided they are  
less for life, will pass unnoticed. With all the in-  
uity and resource which manufacturers put into  
r business, they can scarcely prevent the ordinary  
from seizing on the minute visual characteristics  
distinguish margarine from butter. Some of us  
tell Canadian cheddar at a glance, and no one was  
taken in by sham suède gloves.

<sup>1</sup> *Athenæum*, 1919.

The sense of sight supplies prophetic knowledge of what may affect the inner fortifications, the more intimate senses of taste and touch, where it may already be too late to avert disaster. So we learn to read the prophetic message, and, for the sake of economy, to neglect all else. Children have not learned it fully, and so they look at things with some passion. Even the grown man keeps something of his unbiological, disinterested vision with regard to a few things. He still looks at flowers, and does not merely see them. He also keeps objects which have some marked peculiarity of appearance that catches his eye. These may be natural, like precious stones, fossils, incrustations and such like; or they may be manufactured entirely with a view to playing by peculiarities of colour or shape, and these are called ornaments. Such articles, whether natural or artificial, are called by those who sell them "curios," and the name is not an unhappy one to denote the kind of interest which they arouse. As I showed in a previous article, such objects get attached to them a secondary interest, arising from the kind of social milieu that they were made for, so that they become not merely curious for the eye, but stimulating to our social-historical imagination.

The vision with which we regard such objects is quite distinct from the practical vision of our instinctive life. In the practical vision we have no more concern after we have read the label on the object; vision ceases the moment it has served its biological function. But the curiosity vision does contemplate the object disinterestedly; the object *ex hypothesi* has no significance for actual life; it is a play or fancy object, and our vision dwells much more consciously and deliberately upon it. We notice to some extent its forms and colours, especially when it is new to us.

But human perversity goes further even than this in its misapplication of the gift of sight. We may look at

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But human perversity goes further even than this in its misapplication of the gift of sight. We may look at

objects not even for their curiosity or oddity, but for their harmony of form and colour. To arouse such a vision the object must be more than a "curio": it has to be a work of art. I suspect that such an object must be made by some one in whom the impulse was not to please others, but to express a feeling of his own. It is probably this fundamental difference of origin between the "curio" or ornament and the work of art that makes it impossible for any commercial system, with its eye necessarily on the customer, ever to produce works of art, whatever the ingenuity with which it is attempted.

But we are concerned here not with the origin, but with the vision. This is at once more intense and more detached from the passions of the instinctive life than either of the kinds of vision hitherto discussed. Those who indulge in this vision are entirely absorbed in apprehending the relation of forms and colour to one another, as they cohere within the object. Suppose, for example, that we are looking at a Sung bowl; we apprehend gradually the shape of the outside contour, the perfect sequence of the curves, and the subtle modifications of a certain type of curve which it shows; we also feel the relation of the concave curves of the inside to the outside contour; we realise that the precise thickness of the walls is consistent with the particular kind of matter of which it is made, its appearance of density and resistance; and finally we recognise, perhaps, how satisfactory for the display of all these plastic qualities are the colour and the dull lustre of the glaze. Now while we are thus occupied there comes to us, I think, a feeling of purpose; we feel that all these sensually logical conformities are the outcome of a particular feeling, or of what, for want of a better word, we call an idea; and we may even say that the pot is the expression of an idea in the artist's mind. Whether we are right or not in making this deduction, I believe it nearly always occurs in such æsthetic apprehension

of an object of art. But in all this no element of curiosity, no reference to actual life, comes in; our apprehension is unconditioned by considerations of space or time; it is irrelevant to us to know whether the bowl was made seven hundred years ago in China, or in New York yesterday. We may, of course, at any moment switch off from the æsthetic vision, and become interested in all sorts of quasi-biological feelings; we may inquire whether it is genuine or not, whether it is worth the sum given for it, and so forth; but in proportion as we do this we change the focus of our vision; we are more likely to examine the bottom of the bowl for traces of marks than to look at the bowl itself.

Such, then, is the nature of the æsthetic vision, the vision with which we contemplate works of art. It is to such a vision, if to anything outside himself, that the artist appeals, and the artist in his spare hours may himself indulge in the æsthetic vision; and if one can get him to do so, his verdict is likely to be as good as any one's.

The artist's main business in life, however, is carried on by means of yet a fourth kind of vision, which I will call the creative vision. This, I think, is the furthest perversion of the gifts of nature of which man is guilty. It demands the most complete detachment from any of the meanings and implications of appearances. Almost any turn of the kaleidoscope of nature may set up in the artist this detached and impassioned vision, and, as he contemplates the particular field of vision, the (æsthetically) chaotic and accidental conjunction of forms and colours begins to crystallise into a harmony; and as this harmony becomes clear to the artist, his actual vision becomes distorted by the emphasis of the rhythm which has been set up within him. Certain relations of directions of line become for him full of meaning; he apprehends them no longer casually or merely curiously, but passionately, and these lines begin to be so stressed and stand out so clearly from the

rest that he sees them far more distinctly than he did at first. Similarly colours, which in nature have almost always a certain vagueness and elusiveness, become so definite and clear to him, owing to their now necessary relation to other colours, that if he chooses to paint his vision he can state them positively and definitely. In such a creative vision the objects as such tend to disappear, to lose their separate unities, and to take their places as so many bits in the whole mosaic of vision. The texture of the whole field of vision becomes so close that the coherence of the separate patches of tone and colour within each object is no stronger than the coherence with every other tone and colour throughout the field.

In such circumstances the greatest object of art becomes of no more significance than any casual piece of matter; a man's head is no more and no less important than a pumpkin, or, rather, these things may be so or not according to the rhythm that obsesses the artist and crystallises his vision. Since it is the habitual practice of the artist to be on the look-out for these peculiar arrangements of objects that arouse the creative vision, and become material for creative contemplation, he is liable to look at all objects from this point of view. In so far as the artist looks at objects only as part of a whole field of vision which is his own potential picture, he can give no account of their æsthetic value. Every solid object is subject to the play of light and shade, and becomes a mosaic of visual patches, each of which for the artist is related to other visual patches in the surroundings. It is irrelevant to ask him, while he is looking with this generalised and all-embracing vision, about the nature of the objects which compose it. He is likely even to turn away from works of art in which he may be tempted to relapse into an æsthetic vision, and so see them as unities apart from their surroundings. By preference he turns to objects which

make no strong æsthetic appeal in themselves. But he may like objects which attract by some oddity or peculiarity of form or colour, and thereby suggest to him new and intriguing rhythms. In his continual and restless preoccupation with appearance he is capable of looking at objects from which both the æsthetic and even the curious vision would turn away instinctively, or which they may never notice, so little prospect of satisfaction do they hold out. But the artist may always find his satisfaction, the material for his picture, in the most unexpected quarters. Objects of the most despised periods, or objects saturated for the ordinary man with the most vulgar and repulsive associations, may be grist to his mill. And so it happened that while the man of culture and the connoisseur firmly believed that art ended with the brothers Adam, Mr. Walter Sickert was already busy getting hold of stuffed birds and wax flowers just for his own queer game of tones and colours. And now the collector and the art-dealer will be knocking at Mr. Sickert's door to buy the treasures at twenty times the price the artist paid for them. Perhaps there are already younger artists who are getting excited about the tiles in the refreshment room at South Kensington, and, when the social legend has gathered round the names of Sir Arthur Sullivan and Connie Gilchrist, will inspire in the cultured a deep admiration for the "æsthetic" period.

The artist is of all men the most constantly observant of his surroundings, and the least affected by their intrinsic æsthetic value. He is more likely on the whole to paint a slum in Soho than St. Paul's, and more likely to do a lodging-house interior than a room at Hampton Court. He may, of course, do either, but his necessary detachment comes more easily in one case than the other. The artist is, I believe, a very good critic if you can make him drop his own job for a minute, and really attend to some one else's work of art; but do

## VISION AND DESIGN

not go to him when he is on duty as an artist if you want a sound judgment about objects of art. The different visions I have discussed are like the different gears of a motor-car, only that we sometimes step from one gear into another without knowing it, and the artist may be on the wrong gear for answering us truly. Mr. Walter Sickert is likely to have a Sickert in his eye when he gives us a panegyric on a bedroom candle-stick.

## ART AND SOCIALISM<sup>1</sup>

I AM not a Socialist, as I understand that word, nor can I pretend to have worked out those complex estimates of economic possibility which are needed before one can endorse the hopeful forecasts of Lady Warwick, Mr. Morey, and Mr. Wells. What I propose to do here is first to discuss what effect plutocracy, such as it is to-day, has had of late, and is likely to have in the near future, upon one of the things which I should like to imagine continuing upon our planet—namely, art. And then briefly to prognosticate its chances under such a regime as my colleagues have sketched.

As I understand it, art is one of the chief organs of what, for want of a better word, I must call the spiritual life. It both stimulates and controls those indefinable overtones of the material life of man which all of us at moments feel to have a quality of permanence and reality that does not belong to the rest of our experience. Nature demands with no uncertain voice that the physical needs of the body shall be satisfied first; but we feel that our real human life only begins at the point where that is accomplished, that the man who works at some reative and uncongenial toil merely to earn enough

(Printed with considerable alterations from "The Great War," 1912.)

food to enable him to continue to work has not, properly speaking, a human life at all.

It is the argument of commercialism, as it once was of aristocracy, that the accumulation of surplus wealth in a few hands enables this spiritual life to maintain its existence, that no really valuable or useless work (for from this point of view only useless work has value) could exist in the community without such accumulations of wealth. The argument has been employed for the disinterested work of scientific research. A doctor of naturally liberal and generous impulses told me that he was becoming a reactionary simply because he feared that public bodies would never give the money necessary for research with anything like the same generosity as is now shown by the great plutocrats. But Sir Ray Lankester does not find that generosity sufficient, and is prepared at least to consider whether the State would not be more open-handed.

The situation as regards art and as regards the disinterested love of truth is so similar that we might expect this argument in favour of a plutocratic social order to hold equally well for both art and science, and that the artist would be a fervent upholder of the present system. As a matter of fact, the more representative artists have rarely been such, and not a few, though working their life long for the plutocracy, have been vehement Socialists.

Despairing of the conditions due to modern commercialism, it is not unnatural that lovers of beauty should look back with nostalgia to the age when society was controlled by a landed aristocracy. I believe, however, that from the point of view of the encouragement of great creative art there is not much difference between an aristocracy and a plutocracy. The aristocrat usually had taste, the plutocrat frequently has not. Now taste is of two kinds, the first consisting in the negative avoidance of all that is ill-considered and discordant,

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Despairing of the conditions due to modern commercialism, it is not unnatural that lovers of beauty should look back with nostalgia to the age when society was controlled by a landed aristocracy. I believe, however, that from the point of view of the encouragement of great creative art there is not much difference between an aristocracy and a plutocracy. The aristocrat usually had taste, the plutocrat frequently has not. Now taste is of two kinds, the first consisting in the negative avoidance of all that is ill-considered and discordant,

the other positive and a by-product; it is that harmony which always results from the expression of intense and disinterested emotion. The aristocrat, by means of his good taste of the negative kind, was able to come to terms with the artist; the plutocrat was not. But both alike desire to buy something which is incommensurate with money. Both want art to be a background to their radiant self-consciousness. They want to buy beauty as they want to buy love; and the painter, picture-dealer, and the pander try perennially to persuade them that it is possible. But living beauty cannot be bought; it must be won. I have said that the aristocrat, by his taste, by his feeling for the accidentals of beauty, did manage to get on to some kind of terms with the artist. Hence the art of the eighteenth century, an art that is prone before the distinguished patron, subtly and deliciously flattering and yet always fine. In contrast to that the art of the nineteenth century is coarse, turbulent, clumsy. It marks the beginning of a revolt. The artist just managed to let himself be coaxed and cajoled by the aristocrat, but when the aristocratic was succeeded by the plutocratic patron with less conciliatory manners and no taste, the artist rebelled; and the history of art in the nineteenth century is the history of a band of heroic Ishmaelites, with no secure place in the social system, with nothing to support them in the unequal struggle but a dim sense of a new idea, the idea of the freedom of art from all trammels and tyrannies.

The place that the artists left vacant at the plutocrat's table had to be filled, and it was filled by a race new in the history of the world, a race for whom no name has yet been found, a race of pseudo-artists. As the prostitute professes to sell love, so these gentlemen professed to sell beauty, and they and their patrons rollicked good-humouredly through the Victorian era. They adopted the name and something of the manner of artists; they intercepted not only the money, but

the titles and fame and glory which were intended for those whom they had supplanted. But, while they were yet feasting, there came an event which seemed at the time of no importance, but which was destined to change ultimately the face of things—the exhibition of ancient art at Manchester in 1857. And with this came Ruskin's address on the Political Economy of Art, a work which surprises by its prophetic foresight when we read it half a century later. These two things were the Mene Tekel of the orgy of Victorian Philistinism. The plutocrat saw through the deception; it was not beauty the pseudo-artist sold him, any more than it was love which the prostitute gave. He turned from it in disgust and decided that the only beauty he could buy was the dead beauty of the past. Thereupon set in the worship of *patine* and the age of forgery and the detection of forgery. I once remarked to a rich man that a statue by Rodin might be worthy even of his collection. He replied, "Show me a Rodin with the *patine* of the fifteenth century, and I will buy it."

*Patine*, then, the adventitious material beauty which age alone can give, has come to be the object of a reverence greater than that devoted to the idea which is enshrined within the work of art. People are right to admire *patine*. Nothing is more beautiful than gilded bronze of which time has taken toll until it is nothing but a faded shimmering splendour over depths of inscrutable gloom; nothing finer than the dull glow which Pentelic marble has gathered from past centuries of sunlight and warm Mediterranean breezes. *Patine* is good, but it is a surface charm added to the essential beauty of expression; its beauty is literally skin-deep. It can never come into being or exist in or for itself; no *patine* can make a bad work good, or the forgers would be justified. It is an adjectival and ancillary beauty scarcely worthy of our prolonged contemplation.

There is to the philosopher something pathetic in

## VISION AND DESIGN

the Plutocrat's worship of *patine*. It is, as it were, a compensation for his own want of it. On himself all the rough thumb and chisel marks of his maker—and he is self-made—stand as yet unpolished and raw; but his furniture, at least, shall have the distinction of age-long acquaintance with good manners.

But the net result of all this is that the artist has nothing to hope from the plutocrat. To him we must be grateful indeed for that brusque disillusionment of the real artist, the real artist who might have rubbed along uneasily for yet another century with his predecessor, the aristocrat. Let us be grateful to him for this; but we need not look to him for further benefits, and if we decide to keep him the artist must be content to be paid after he is dead and vicariously in the person of an art-dealer. The artist must be content to look on while sums are given for dead beauty, the tenth part of which, properly directed, would irrigate whole nations and stimulate once more the production of vital artistic expression.

I would not wish to appear to blame the plutocrat. He has often honestly done his best for art; the trouble is not of his making more than of the artist's, and the misunderstanding between art and commerce is bound to be complete. The artist, however mean and avaricious he may appear, knows that he cannot really sell himself for money any more than the philosopher or the scientific investigator can sell himself for money. He takes —ney in the hope that he may secure the opportunity the free functioning of his creative power. If the —on could give him that instead of money he would s him; but he cannot, and so he tries to get him work not quite freely for money; and in revenge artist indulges in all manner of insolences, even perhaps in sharp practices, which make the patron feel, with some justification, that he is the victim of ingratitude and wanton caprice. It is impossible that

the artist should work for the plutocrat; he must work for himself, because it is only by so doing that he can perform the function for which he exists; it is only by working for himself that he can work for mankind.

If, then, the particular kind of accumulation of surplus wealth which we call plutocracy has failed, as surely it has signally failed, to stimulate the creative power of the imagination, what disposition of wealth might be conceived that would succeed better? First of all, a greater distribution of wealth, with a lower standard of ostentation, would, I think, do a great deal to improve things without any great change in other conditions. It is not enough known that the patronage which really counts to-day is exercised by quite small and humble people. These people with a few hundreds a year exercise a genuine patronage by buying pictures at ten, twenty, or occasionally thirty pounds, with real insight and understanding, thereby enabling the young Ishmaelite to live and function from the age of twenty to thirty or so, when perhaps he becomes known to richer buyers, those experienced spenders of money who are always more cautious, more anxious to buy an investment than a picture. These poor, intelligent first patrons to whom I allude belong mainly to the professional classes; they have none of the pretensions of the plutocrat and none of his ambitions. The work of art is not for them, as for him a decorative backcloth to his stage, but an idol and an inspiration. Merely to increase the number and potency of these people would already accomplish much; and this is to be noticed, that if wealth were more evenly distributed, if no one had a great deal of wealth, those who really cared for art would become the sole patrons, since for all it would be an appreciable sacrifice, and for none an impossibility. The man who only buys pictures when he has as many motor-cars as he can conceivably want would drop out as a patron altogether.

But even this would only foster the minor and private arts; and what the history of art definitely elucidates is that the greatest art has always been communal, the expression—in highly individualised ways, no doubt—of common aspirations and ideals.

Let us suppose, then, that society were so arranged that considerable surplus wealth lay in the hands of public bodies, both national and local; can we have any reasonable hope that they would show more skill in carrying out the delicate task of stimulating and using the creative power of the artist?

The immediate prospect is certainly not encouraging. Nothing, for instance, is more deplorable than to watch the patronage of our provincial museums. The gentlemen who administer these public funds naturally have not realised so acutely as private buyers the lesson so admirably taught at Christie's, that pseudo or Royal-Academic art is a bad investment. Nor is it better if we turn to national patronage. In Great Britain, at least, we cannot get a postage stamp or a penny even respectably designed, much less a public monument. Indeed, the tradition that all public British art shall be crassly mediocre and inexpressive is so firmly rooted that it seems to have almost the prestige of constitutional precedent.<sup>1</sup> Nor will any one who has watched a committee commissioning a presentation portrait, or even buying an old master, be in danger of taking too optimistic a view. With rare and shining exceptions, committees seem to be at the mercy of the lowest common denominator of their individual natures, which is dominated by fear of criticism; and fear and its attendant, compromise, are bad masters of the arts.

Speaking recently at Liverpool, Mr. Bernard Shaw placed the present situation as regards public art in its

<sup>1</sup> A precedent fully maintained by the war-monuments which have covered the English country-side since the above article was written.

true light. He declared that the corruption of taste and the emotional insincerity of the mass of the people had gone so far that any picture which pleased more than ten per cent. of the population should be immediately burned. . . .

This, then, is the fundamental fact we have to face. And it is this that gives us pause when we try to construct any conceivable system of public patronage.

For the modern artist puts the question of any socialistic—or, indeed, of any completely ordered—state, in its acutest form. He demands as an essential to the proper use of his powers a freedom from restraint such as no other workman expects. He must work when he feels inclined; he cannot work to order. Hence his frequent quarrels with the burgher who knows he has to work when he is disinclined, and cannot conceive why the artist should not do likewise. The burgher watches the artist's wayward and apparently quite unmethodical activity, and envies his job. Now, in any Socialistic State, if certain men are licensed to pursue the artistic calling, they are likely to be regarded by the other workers with some envy. There may be a competition for such soft jobs among those who are naturally work-shy, since it will be evident that the artist is not called to account in the same way as other workers.

If we suppose, as seems not unlikely, in view of the immense numbers who become artists in our present social state, that there would be this competition for the artistic work of the community, what methods would be devised to select those required to fill the coveted posts? Frankly, the history of art in the nine teenth century makes us shudder at the results that would follow. One scarcely knows whether they would be worse if Bumble or the Academy were judge. We only know that under any such conditions *none* of the artists whose work has ultimately counted in the spiritual

development of the race would have been allowed to practise the coveted profession.

There is in truth, as Ruskin pointed out in his "Political Economy of Art," a gross and wanton waste under the present system. We have thousands of artists who are only so by accident and by name, on the one hand, and certainly many—one cannot tell how many—who have the special gift but have never had the peculiar opportunities which are to-day necessary to allow it to expand and function. But there is, what in an odd way consoles us, a blind chance that the gift and the opportunity may coincide; that Shelley and Browning may have a competence, and Cézanne a farm-house he could retire to. Bureaucratic Socialism would, it seems take away even this blind chance that mankind may benefit by its least appreciable, most elusive treasures, and would carefully organise the complete suppression of original creative power; would organise into a universal and all-embracing tyranny the already overweening and disastrous power of endowed official art. For we must face the fact that the average man has two qualities which would make the proper selection of the artist almost impossible. He has, first of all, a touching proclivity to awe-struck admiration of whatever is presented to him as noble by a constituted authority; and, secondly, a complete absence of any immediate reaction to a work of art until his judgment has thus been hypnotised by the voice of authority. Then, and not till then, he sees, or swears he sees, those adorable Emperor's clothes that he is always agape for.

I am speaking, of course, of present conditions, of a populace whose emotional life has been drugged by the sugared poison of pseudo-art, a populace saturated with snobbishness, and regarding art chiefly for its value as a symbol of social distinctions. There have been times when such a system of public patronage as we are discussing might not have been altogether

disastrous. Times when the guilds represented more or less adequately the genuine artistic intelligence of the time; but the creation, first of all, of aristocratic art, and finally of pseudo-art, have brought it about that almost any officially organised system would at the present moment stereotype all the worst features of modern art.

Now, in thus putting forward the extreme difficulties of any system of publicly controlled art, we are emphasising perhaps too much the idea of the artist as a creator of purely ideal and abstract works, as the medium of inspiration and the source of revelation. It is the artist as prophet and priest that we have been considering, the artist who is the articulate soul of mankind. Now, in the present commercial State, at a time when such handiwork as is not admirably fitted to some purely utilitarian purpose has become inanely fatuous and grotesque, the artist in this sense has undoubtedly become of supreme importance as a protestant, as one who proclaims that art is a reasonable function, and one that proceeds by a nice adjustment of means to ends. But if we suppose a state in which all the ordinary objects of daily life—our chairs and tables, our carpets and pottery—expressed something of this reasonableness instead of a crazy and vapid fantasy the artist as a pure creator might become, not indeed of less importance—rather more—but a less acute necessity to our general living than he is to-day. Something of the sanity and purposefulness of his attitude might conceivably become infused into the work of the ordinary craftsman, something, too, of his creative energy and delight in work. We must, therefore, turn for a moment from the abstractly creative artist to the applied arts and those who practise them.

We are so far obliged to protect ourselves from the implications of modern life that without a special effort it is hard to conceive the enormous quantity

of "art" that is annually produced and consumed. For the special purpose of realising it I take the pains to write the succeeding paragraphs in a railway refreshment-room, where I am actually looking at those terribly familiar but fortunately fleeting images which such places afford. And one must remember that public places of this kind merely reflect the average citizen's soul, as expressed in his home.

The space my eye travels over is a small one, but I am appalled at the amount of "art" that it harbours. The window towards which I look is filled in its lower part by stained glass; within a highly elaborate border, designed by some one who knew the conventions of thirteenth-century glass, is a pattern of yellow and purple vine leaves with bunches of grapes, and flitting about among these many small birds. In front is a lace curtain with patterns taken from at least four centuries and as many countries. On the walls, up to a height of four feet, is a covering of lincrusta walton stamped with a complicated pattern in two colours, with sham silver medallions. Above that a moulding but an inch wide, and yet creeping throughout its whole with a degenerate descendant of a Græco-Roman carved guilloche pattern; this has evidently been cut out of the wood by machine or stamped out of some composition—its nature is so perfectly concealed that it is hard to say which. Above this is a wall-paper in which an effect of eighteenth-century satin brocade is imitated by shaded staining of the paper. Each of the little refreshment-tables has two cloths, one arranged symmetrically with the table, the other a highly ornate printed cotton arranged "artistically" in a diagonal position. In the centre of each table is a large pot in which every beautiful quality in the material and making of pots has been carefully obliterated by methods each of which implies profound scientific knowledge and great inventive talent. Within each pot is a plant with

large dark green leaves, apparently made of india-rubber. This painful catalogue makes up only a small part of the inventory of the "art" of the restaurant. If I were to go on to tell of the legs of the tables, of the electric-light fittings, of the chairs into the wooden seats of which some tremendous mechanical force has deeply impressed a large distorted anthemion—if I were to tell of all these things, my reader and I might both begin to realise with painful acuteness something of the horrible toil involved in all this display. Display is indeed the end and explanation of it all. Not one of these things has been made because the maker enjoyed the making; not one has been bought because its contemplation would give any one any pleasure, but solely because each of these things is accepted as a symbol of a particular social status. I say their contemplation can give no one pleasure; they are there because their absence would be resented by the average man who regards a large amount of futile display as in some way inseparable from the conditions of that well-to-do life to which he belongs or aspires to belong. If everything were merely clean and serviceable he would proclaim the place bare and uncomfortable.

The doctor who lines his waiting-room with bad photogravures and worse etchings is acting on exactly the same principle; in short, nearly all our "art" is made, bought, and sold merely for its value as an indication of social status.

Now consider the case of those men whose life-work it is to stimulate this eczematous eruption of pattern on the surface of modern manufactures. They are by far the most numerous "artists" in the country. Each of them has not only learned to draw, but has learned by sheer application to put forms together with a similitude of the coherence which creative impulse gives. Probably each of them has somewhere within him something of the creative impulse which is the inspiration and

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in these manufacturer's designers the pressure of commercial life has crushed and atrophied that creative impulse completely. Their business is to produce, no expressive design, but dead patterns. They are compelled, therefore, to spend their lives behaving in an entirely idiotic and senseless manner, and that with the certainty that no one will ever get positive pleasure from the result; for one may hazard the statement that until I made the effort just now, no one of the thousands who use the refreshment-rooms ever really looked at the designs.

This question of the creation and consumption of art tends to become more and more pressing. I have shown just now what an immense mass of art is consumed, but this is not the same art as that which the genuine artist produces. The work of the truly creative artist is not merely useless to the social man—it appears to be noxious and inassimilable. Before art can be "consumed" the artistic idea must undergo a process of disinfection. It must have had extracted and removed from it all, or nearly all, that makes it æsthetically valuable. What occurs when a great artist creates a new idea is somewhat as follows: We know the process well enough, since an example of it has occurred within the last fifty years. An artist attains to a new vision. He grasps this with such conviction that he is able to express it in his work. Those few people in his immediate surroundings who have the faculty of æsthetic perception become very much excited by the new vision. The average man, on the other hand, lacks this faculty and, moreover, instinctively protects the rounded perfection of his universe of thought and feeling from the intrusion of new experience; in consequence he becomes extremely irritated by the sight of works which appear to him completely unintelligible. The misunderstanding between this small minority and the

public becomes violent. Then some of the more intelligent writers on art recognise that the new idea is really related to past æsthetic expressions which have become recognised. Then a clever artist, without any individual vision of his own, sees the possibility of using a modification of the new idea, and makes an ingenious compromise between it and the old, generally accepted notions of art. The public, which has been irritated by its incomprehension of the new idea, finding the compromise just intelligible, and delighted to find itself cleverer than it thought, acclaims the compromising intermediary as a genius. The process of disinfection thus begun goes on with increasing energy and rapidity, and before long the travesty of the new idea is completely assimilable by the social organism. The public, after swallowing innumerable imitations of the new idea, may even at last reluctantly accept the original creator as a great man, but generally not until he has been dead for some time and has become a vague and mythical figure.

It is literally true to say that the imitations of works of art are more assimilable by the public than originals, and therefore always tend to fetch a higher price in the market at the moment of their production.

The fact is that the average man uses art entirely for its symbolic value. Art is in fact the symbolic currency of the world. The possession of rare and much-coveted works of art is regarded as a sign of national greatness. The growth and development of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum was due to the active support of the Emperor William II., a man whose distaste for genuine art is notorious, but whose sense of the symbolic was highly developed. Large and expensively ornamented buildings become symbols of municipal greatness. The amount of useless ornaments on the façades of their offices is a valuable symbol of the financial exuberance of big commercial undertakings;

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and, finally, the social status of the individual is expressed to the admiring or envious outer world by the stream-lines of an aristocratic motor-car, or the superfluity of lace curtains in the front windows of a genteel suburban villa.

The social man, then, lives in a world of symbols, and though he presses other things into his service, such, for instance, as kings, footmen, dogs, women, he finds in art his richest reservoir of symbolic currency. But in a world of symbolists the creative artist and the creative man of science appear in strange isolation as the only people who are not symbolists. They alone are up against certain relations which do not stand for something else, but appear to have ultimate value, to be real.

Art as a symbolic currency is an important means of the instinctive life of man, but art as created by the artist is in violent revolt against the instinctive life, since it is an expression of the reflective and fully conscious life. It is natural enough, then, that before it can be used by the instinctive life it must be deprived by travesty of its too violent assertion of its own reality. Travesty is necessary at first to make it assimilable, but in the end long familiarity may rob even original works of art of their insistence, so that, finally, even the great masterpieces may become the most cherished symbols of the lords of the instinctive life—may, as in fact they frequently do, become the property of millionaires.

A great deal of misunderstanding and ill-feeling between the artist and the public comes from a failure to realise the necessity of this process of assimilation of the work of art to the needs of the instinctive life.

I suspect that a very similar process takes place with regard to truth. In order that truth may not outrage too violently the passions and egoisms of the instinctive life, it too must undergo a process of deformation.

Society, for example, accepts as much of the ascertainable truth as it can stand at a given period in the form of the doctrine of its organised religion.

Now what effect would the development of the Great State which this book anticipates have upon all this? First, I suppose that the fact that every one had to work might produce a new reverence, especially in the governing body, for work, a new sense of disgust and horror at wasteful and purposeless work. Mr. Money has written of waste of work; here in unwanted pseudo-art is another colossal waste. Add to this ideal of economy in work the presumption that the workers in every craft would be more thoroughly organised and would have a more decisive voice in the nature and quality of their productions. Under the present system of commercialism the one object, and the complete justification, of producing any article is, that it can be made either by its intrinsic value, or by the fictitious value put upon it by advertisement, to sell with a sufficient profit to the manufacturer. In any socialistic state, I imagine—and to a large extent the Great State will be socialistic at least—there would not be this same automatic justification for manufacture; people would not be induced artificially to buy what they did not want, and in this way a more genuine scale of values would be developed. Moreover, the workman would be in a better position to say how things should be made. After years of a purely commercial standard, there is left even now, in the average workman, a certain bias in favour of sound and reasonable workmanship as opposed to the ingenious manufacture of fatuous and fraudulent objects; and, if we suppose the immediate pressure of sheer necessity to be removed, it is probable that the craftsman, acting through his guild organisations, would determine to some extent the methods of manufacture. Guilds might, indeed, regain something of the political influence that gave

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us the Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages. It is quite probable that this guild influence would act as a check on some innovations in manufacture which though bringing in a profit, are really disastrous to the community at large. Of such a nature are all the so called improvements whereby decoration, the whole value of which consists in its expressive power, is multiplied indefinitely by machinery. When once the question of the desirability of any and every production came to be discussed, as it would be in the Great State it would inevitably follow that some reasonable and scientific classifications would be undertaken with regard to machinery. That is to say, it would be considered in what processes and to what degree machinery ought to replace handiwork, both from the point of view of the community as a whole and from that of the producer. So far as I know, this has never been undertaken even with regard to mere economy, no one having calculated with precision how far the longer life of certain hand-made articles does not more than compensate for increased cost of production. And suppose that in the Great State other things besides mere economy would come into the calculation. The Great State will live, not hoard.

It is probable that in many directions we should extend mechanical operations immensely, that such things as the actual construction of buildings, the mere laying and placing of the walls might become increasingly mechanical. Such methods, if confined to purely structural elements, are capable of beauty of a special kind, since they can express the ordered idea of proportion, balance, and interval as conceived in the creative mind of the architect. But in process of time one might hope to see a sharp line of division between work of this kind and such purely expressive and non-utilitarian design as we call ornament; and it would be felt clearly that into this field no mechanization

device should intrude, that, while ornament might be dispensed with, it could never be imitated, since its only reason for being is that it conveys the vital expressive power of a human mind acting constantly and directly upon matter.

Finally, I suppose that in the Great State we might hope to see such a considerable levelling of social conditions that the false values put upon art by its symbolising of social status would be largely destroyed, and, the pressure of mere opinion being relieved, people would develop some more immediate reaction to the work of art than they can at present achieve.

Supposing, then, that under the Great State it was found impossible, at all events at first, to stimulate and organise the abstract creative power of the pure artist, the balance might after all be in favour of the new order if the whole practice of applied art could once more become rational and purposeful. In a world where the objects of daily use and ornament were made with practical common sense, the æsthetic sense would need far less to seek consolation and repose in works of pure art.

Nevertheless, in the long run mankind will not allow this function, which is necessary to its spiritual life, to lapse entirely. I imagine, however, that it would be much safer to penalise rather than to stimulate such activity, and that simply in order to sift out those with a genuine passion from those who are merely attracted by the apparent ease of the pursuit. I imagine that the artist would naturally turn to one of the applied arts as his means of livelihood; and we should get the artist coming out of the *bottéga*, as he did in fifteenth-century Florence. There are, moreover, innumerable crafts, even besides those that are definitely artistic, which, pursued for short hours—Sir Leo Money has shown how short these hours might be—would leave a man free to pursue other callings in his leisure.

The majority of poets to-day are artists in this position. It is comparatively rare for any one to make of poetry his actual means of livelihood. Our poets are, first of all, clerks, critics, civil servants, or postmen. I very much doubt if it would be a serious loss to the community if the pure graphic artist were in the same position. That is to say, that all our pictures would be made by amateurs. It is quite possible to suppose that this would be not a loss, but a great gain. The painter's means of livelihood would probably be some craft in which his artistic powers would be constantly occupied, though at a lower tension and in a humbler way. The Great State aims at human freedom; essentially, it is an organisation for leisure—out of which art grows; it is only a purely bureaucratic Socialism that would attempt to control the aesthetic lives of men.

So I conceive that those in whom the instinct for abstract creative art was strongest would find ample opportunities for its exercise, and that the temptation to stimulate this particular activity would be easily resisted by those who had no powerful inner compulsion.

In the Great State, moreover, and in any sane Socialism, there would be opportunity for a large amount of purely private buying and selling. Mr. Wells's Modern Utopia, for example, hypothecates a vast superstructure of private trading. A painter might sell his pictures to those who were engaged in more lucrative employment, though one supposes that with the much more equal distribution of wealth the sums available for this would be incomparably smaller than at present; a picture would not be a speculation, but a pleasure, and no one would become an artist in the hope of making a fortune.

Ultimately, of course, when art had been purified of its present unreality by a prolonged contact with the crafts, society would gain a new confidence in its collective artistic judgment, and might even boldly assume the responsibility which at present it knows

it is unable to face. It might choose its poets and painters and philosophers and deep investigators, and make of such men and women a new kind of kings.

ART AND SCIENCE<sup>1</sup>

THE author of an illuminating article, "The Place of Science," in *The Athenæum* for April 11th, distinguishes between two aspects of intellectual activity in scientific work. Of these two aspects one derives its motive power from curiosity, and this deals with particular facts. It is only when, through curiosity, man has accumulated a mass of particular observations that the second intellectual activity manifests itself, and in this the motive is the satisfaction which the mind gets from the contemplation of inevitable relations. To secure this end the utmost possible generalisation is necessary.

In a later article S. says boldly that this satisfaction is an æsthetic satisfaction: "It is in its æsthetic value that the justification of the scientific theory is to be found, and with it the justification of the scientific method." I should like to pose to S. at this point the question of whether a theory that disregarded facts would have equal value for science with one which agreed with facts. I suppose he would say No; and yet, so far as I can see, there would be no purely æsthetic reason why it should not. The æsthetic value of a theory would surely depend solely on the perfection and complexity of the unity attained, and I imagine that many systems of scholastic theology, and even some more recent systems of metaphysics, have only this æsthetic value. I suspect that the æsthetic value of a theory is not really sufficient to justify the intellectual effort entailed unless, as in a true scientific theory—by which I mean

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a theory which embraces all the known relevant facts—the æsthetic value is reinforced by the curiosity value which comes in when we believe it to be true. But now, returning to art, let me try to describe rather more clearly its analogies with science.

Both of these aspects—the particularising and the generalising—have their counterparts in art. Curiosity impels the artist to the consideration of every possible form in nature: under its stimulus he tends to accept each form in all its particularity as a given, unalterable fact. The other kind of intellectual activity impels the artist to attempt the reduction of all forms, as it were, to some common 'denominator' which will make them comparable with one another. It impels him to discover some æsthetically intelligible principle in various forms, and even to envisage the possibility of some kind of abstract form in the æsthetic contemplation of which the mind would attain satisfaction—a satisfaction curiously parallel to that which the mind gets from the intellectual recognition of abstract truth.

If we consider the effects of these two kinds of intellectual activity, or rather their exact analogues, in art, we have to note that in so far as the artist's curiosity remains a purely intellectual curiosity it interferes with the perfection and purity of the work of art by introducing an alien and non-æsthetic element and appealing to non-æsthetic desires; in so far as it merely supplies the artist with new motives and a richer material out of which to build his designs, it is useful but subsidiary. Thus the objection to a "subject picture," in so far as one remains conscious of the subject as something outside of, and apart from, the form, is a valid objection to the intrusion of intellect, of however rudimentary a kind, into an æsthetic whole. The ordinary historical pictures of our annual shows will furnish perfect examples of such an intrusion, since they exhibit innumerable appeals to intellectual recognitions without

which the pictures would be meaningless. Without some previous knowledge of Caligula or Mary Queen of Scots we are likely to miss our way in a great deal of what passes for art to-day.

The case of the generalising intellect, or rather its analogue, in art is more difficult. Here the recognition of relations is immediate and sensational—perhaps we ought to consider it as curiously akin to those cases of mathematical geniuses who have immediate intuition of mathematical relations which it is beyond their powers to prove—so that it is by analogy that we may talk of it at all as intellectual. But the analogy is so close that I hope it may justify the use I here suggest. For in both cases the utmost possible generalisation is aimed at, and in both the mind is held in delighted equilibrium by the contemplation of the inevitable relations of all the parts in the whole, so that no need exists to make reference to what is outside the unity, and this becomes for the time being a universe.

It will be seen how close the analogies are between the methods and aims of art and science, and yet there remains an obstinate doubt in the mind whether at any point they are identical. Probably in order to get much further we must wait for the psychologists to solve a number of problems; meanwhile this at least must be pointed out—that, allowing that the motives of science are emotional, many of its processes are purely intellectual, that is to say, mechanical. They could be performed by a perfectly non-sentient, emotionless brain, whereas at no point in the process of art can we drop feeling. There is something in the common phraseology by which we talk of *seeing* a point or an argument, whereas we *feel* the harmony of a work of art; and for some reason we attach a more constant emotional quality to feeling than to seeing, which is in more frequent request for coldly practical ends.

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which corresponds in science to the purely logical process; and finally there is the unity-emotion, which may not improbably be of an identical kind in both art and science.

In the art of painting we may distinguish between the unity of texture and the unity of design. I know quite well that these are not really completely separable, and that they are to some extent mutually dependent; but they may be regarded as separate for the purpose of focussing our attention. Certainly we can think of pictures in which the general architecture of the design is in no way striking or remarkable which yet please us by the perfection of the texture, that is to say, the ease with which we apprehend the necessary relationship of one shape, tone or colour with its immediately surrounding shapes, tones or colours; our æsthetic sense is continually aroused and satisfied by the succession of inevitable relationships. On the other hand, we know of works of art in which the unity and complexity of the texture strike us far less than the inevitable and significant relationship of the main divisions of the design—pictures in which we should say that the composition was the most striking beauty. It is when the composition of a picture, adequately supported as it must be by significance of texture, reveals to us the most surprising and yet inevitable relationships that we get most strongly the final unity-emotion of a work of art. It is these pictures that are, as S. would say of certain theories, the most significant for contemplation. Nor before such works can we help implicitly attributing to their authors the same kind of power which in science we should call "great intellect," though perhaps in both the term "great imaginative organisation" would be better.

the highest efforts of design each point in the process of art is inevitably accompanied by pleasure; it cannot proceed without it. If we describe the process of art as a logic of sensation, we must remember that the premises are sensations, and that the conclusion can only be drawn from them by one who is in an emotional state with regard to them. Thus a harmony in music cannot be perceived by a person who merely hears accurately the notes which compose it—it can only be recognised when the relations of those notes to one another are accompanied by emotion. It is quite true that the recognition of inevitability in thought is normally accompanied by a pleasurable emotion, and that the desire for this mental pleasure is the motive force which impels to the making of scientific theory. But the inevitability of the relations remains equally definite and demonstrable whether the emotion accompanies it or not, whereas an æsthetic harmony simply does not exist without the emotional state. The harmony is not *true*—to use our analogy—unless it is felt with emotion.

None the less, perhaps, the highest pleasure in art is identical with the highest pleasure in scientific theory. The emotion which accompanies the clear recognition of unity in a complex seems to be so similar in art and in science that it is difficult not to suppose that they are psychologically the same. It is, as it were, the final stage of both processes. This unity-emotion in science supervenes upon a process of pure mechanical reasoning; in art it supervenes upon a process of which emotion has all along been an essential concomitant.

It may be that in the complete apprehension of a work of art there occurs more than one kind of feeling. There is generally a basis of purely physiological pleasure, as in seeing pure colours or hearing pure sounds; then there is the specifically æsthetic emotion by means of which the necessity of relations is apprehended, and

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## THE ART OF THE BUSHMEN<sup>1</sup>

IN the history of mankind drawing has at different times and among different races expressed so many different conceptions, and has used such various means, that it would seem to be not one art, but many. It would seem, indeed, that it has its origins in several quite distinct instincts of the human race, and it may not be altogether unimportant even for the modern draughtsman to investigate these instincts in their simpler manifestations in order to check and control his own methods. The primitive drawing of our own race is singularly like that of children. Its most striking peculiarity is the extent to which it is dominated by the concepts of language. In a child's drawing we find a number of forms which have scarcely any reference to actual appearances, but which directly symbolise the most significant concepts of the thing represented. For a child, a man is the sum of the concept's head (which in turn consists of eyes, nose, mouth), of his arms, his hands (five fingers), his legs and his feet. Torso is not a concept which interests him, and it is, therefore, usually reduced to a single line which serves to link the concept-symbol head with those of the legs. The child does, of course, know that the figure thus drawn is not like a man, but it is a kind of hieroglyphic script for a man, and satisfies his desire for expression. Precisely the same phenomenon occurs in primitive art; the symbols for concepts gradually take on more and more of the likeness to appearances, but the mode of approach remains even in comparatively advanced periods the same. The artist does not seek to transfer a visual sensation to paper, but to express

<sup>1</sup> *Burlington Magazine*, 1910.

a mental image which is coloured by his conceptual habits.

Prof. Loewy<sup>1</sup> has investigated the laws which govern representation in early art, and has shown that the influence of the early artist's ideas of conceptual symbolism persist in Greek sculpture down to the time of Lysippus. He enumerates seven peculiarities of early drawing, of which the most important are that the figures are shown with each of their parts in its broadest aspect, and that the forms are stylised—*i.e.*, present linear formations that are regular or tend to regularity.

Of the first of these peculiarities Egyptian and Assyrian sculpture, even of the latest and most developed periods, afford constant examples. We see there the head in profile, the eye full face, the shoulders and breast full face, and by a sudden twist in the body the legs and feet again in profile. In this way each part is presented in that aspect which most clearly expresses its corresponding visual concepts. Thus a foot is much more clearly denoted by its profile view than by the rendering of its frontal appearance—while no one who was asked to think of an eye would visualise it to himself in any other than a full-face view. In such art, then, the body is twisted about so that each part may be represented by that aspect which the mental image aroused by the name of the part would have, and the figure becomes an ingenious compound of typical conceptual images. In the case of the head two aspects are accepted as symbolic of the concept "head," the profile and the full-face; but it is very late in the development of art before men are willing to accept any intermediate position as intelligible or satisfactory. It is generally supposed that early art avoids foreshortening because of its difficulty. One may suppose rather that it is because the foreshortened view of a member corres-

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ponds so ill with the normal conceptual image, and is therefore not accepted as sufficiently expressive of the idea. Yet another of the peculiarities named by Prof. Loewy must be mentioned, namely, that the "conformation and movement of the figures and their parts are limited to a few typical shapes." And these movements are always of the simplest kinds, since they are governed by the necessity of displaying each member in its broadest and most explicit aspect. In particular the crossing of one limb over another is avoided as confusing.

Such, in brief outline, are some of the main principles of drawing both among primitive peoples and among our own children. It is not a little surprising then to find, when we turn to Miss Tongue's careful copies of the drawings executed by the Bushmen of South Africa,<sup>1</sup> that the principles are more often contradicted than exemplified. We find, it is true, a certain barbaric crudity and simplicity which give these drawings a superficial resemblance to children's drawings or those of primitive times, but a careful examination will show how different they are. The drawings are of different periods, though none of them probably are of any considerable antiquity, since the habit of painting over an artist's work when once he was forgotten obtained among the bushmen no less than with more civilised people. These drawings are also of very different degrees of skill. They represent for the most part scenes of the chase and war, dances and festivals, and in one case there is an illustration to a bushman story and one figure is supposed to represent a ghost. There is no evidence of deliberate decorative purpose in these paintings. The figures are cast upon the walls of the cave in such a way as to represent, roughly, the actual

<sup>1</sup> "Bushman Drawings," copied by M. Helen Tongue, with preface by Henry Balfour. Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1909. 3s. net.

scenes.<sup>1</sup> Nothing could be more unlike primitive art than some of these scenes. For instance, the battle fought between two tribes over the possession of some cattle, is entirely unlike battle scenes such as we find in early Assyrian reliefs. There the battle is schematic, all the soldiers of one side are in profile to right, all the soldiers of the opposing side are in profile to left. The whole scene is perfectly clear to the intelligence, it follows the mental image of what a battle ought to be, but is entirely unlike what a battle ever is. Now, in the Bushman drawing there is nothing truly schematic; it is difficult to find out the soldiers of the two sides; they are all mixed up in a confused hurly-burly, some charging, others flying, and here and there single combats going on at a distance from the main battle. But more than this; the men are in every conceivable attitude, running, standing, kneeling, crouching, or turning sharply round in the middle of flight to face the enemy once more.

In fact we have, in all its confusion, all its indeterminate variety and accident, a rough silhouette of the actual appearance of such a scene as viewed from above, for the Bushman makes this sacrifice of actual appearance to lucidity of statement—that he represents the figures as spread out over the ground, and not as seen one behind another.

Or take again Plate XI of Miss Tongue's album; the scene is the Veldt with elands and rheboks scattered over its surface. The animals are arranged in the most natural and casual manner; sometimes in this case part of one animal is hidden by the animal in front;

<sup>1</sup> This absence of decorative feeling may be due to the irregular and vague outlines of the picture space. It is when the picture must be fitted within determined limits that decoration begins. I have noticed that children's drawings are never decorative when they have the whole surface of a sheet of paper to draw on, but they will design a frieze with well-marked rhythm when they have only a narrow strip.

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## VISION AND DESIGN

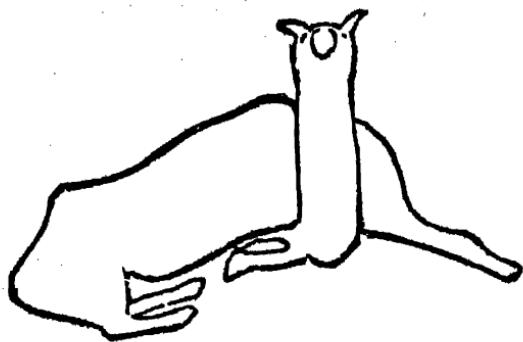


FIG. 1.



FIG. 2.



FIG. 3.

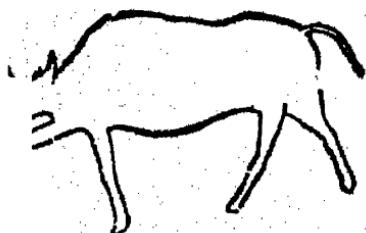


FIG. 4.



FIG. 5.

## THE ART OF THE BUSHMEN

but what strikes one most is the fact that extremely complicated poses are rendered with the same ease as the more frequent profile view, and that momentary actions are treated with photographic verisimilitude. See Figs. 1 and 2.

Another surprising instance of this is shown in Fig. 3, taken from Plate XIX of Miss Tongue's book, and giving a rhebok seen from behind in a most difficult and complicated attitude. Or again, the man running in Fig. 5. Here is the silhouette of a most complicated gesture with foreshortening of one thigh and crossing of the arm holding the bow over the torso, rendered with apparent certainty and striking verisimilitude. Most curious of all are the cases of which Fig. 4 is an example, of animals trotting, in which the gesture is seen by us to be true only because our slow and imperfect vision has been helped out by the instantaneous photograph. Fifty years ago we should have rejected such a rendering as absurd; we now know it to be a correct statement of one movement in the action of trotting.

Another point to be noticed is that in primitive and in children's art such features as eyes, ears, horns, tails, since they correspond to well-marked concepts, always tend to be drawn disproportionately large and prominent. Now, in the Bushman drawings, the eye, the most significant of all, is frequently omitted, and when represented bears its true proportion to the head. Similarly, horns, ears and tails are never exaggerated. Indeed, however faulty these drawings may be, they have one great quality, namely, that each figure is seen as a single entity, and the general character of the silhouette is aimed at rather than a sum of the parts. Those who have taught drawing to children will know with what infinite pains civilised man arrives at this power.

By way of contrast to these extraordinary performances of the Bushman draughtsman, I give in outline

Fig. 6, the two horses of a chariot on an early—Dipylon—Greek vase. The man who drew it was incomparably more of an artist; but how entirely his intellectual and conceptual way of handling phenomena has obscured his vision! His two horses are a sum of concept-symbols, arranged with great orderliness and with a decorative feeling, but without any sort of likeness to appearance. Mr. Balfour, in his preface to Miss Tongue's book, notices briefly some of these striking characteristics of the Bushman drawings. He says:

"The paintings are remarkable not only for the realism exhibited by so many, but also for a freedom from the limitation to delineation in profile which characterises for the most part the drawings of primitive peoples, especially where animals are concerned. Attitudes of a kind difficult to render were ventured upon without hesitation, and an appreciation even of the rudiments of perspective is occasionally to be noted,

though only in a crude and uncertain form. The practice of endeavouring to represent more than could be seen at one time, a habit so characteristic of the art of primitive peoples as also of civilised children, is far less noticeable in Bushman art than might have been expected from the rudimentary general culture of these people, and one does not see instances of *both* eyes being indicated upon a profile face, or a mouth in profile on a full face, such as are so familiar in the undeveloped art of children and of most backward races."

"Since, then, Bushman drawing has little analogy to primitive art of our own races, to what can we



FIG. 6.

relate it? The Bushmen of Australia have apparently something of the same power of transcribing pure visual images, but the most striking case is that of Palæolithic man. In the caves of the Dordogne and of Altamira in Spain, Palæolithic man has left paintings which date from about 10,000 B.C., in which, as far as mere naturalism of representation of animals goes, he has surpassed anything that not only our own primitive peoples, but even the most accomplished animal draughtsmen

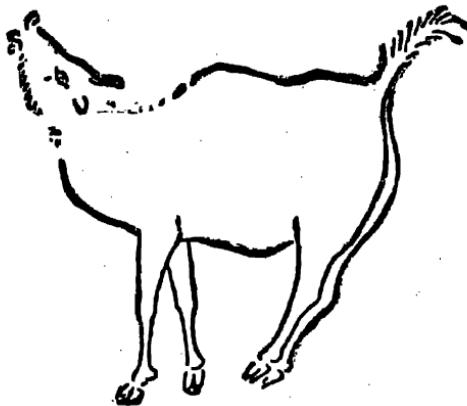


FIG. 7.

have ever achieved. Fig. 7 shows in outline a bison from Altamira. The certainty and completeness of the pose, the perfect rhythm and the astonishing verisimilitude of the movement are evident even in this. The Altamira drawings show a much higher level of accomplishment than those of the Bushmen, but the general likeness is so great as to have suggested the idea that the Bushmen are descendants of Palæolithic man who have remained at the same rudimentary stage as regards the other arts of life, and have retained something of their unique power of visual transcription.

Whether this be so or not, it is to be noted that all

relate it? The Bushmen of Australia have apparently something of the same power of transcribing pure visual images, but the most striking case is that of Palæolithic man. In the caves of the Dordogne and of Altamira in Spain, Palæolithic man has left paintings which date from about 10,000 B.C., in which, as far as mere naturalism of representation of animals goes, he has surpassed anything that not only our own primitive peoples, but even the most accomplished animal draughtsmen

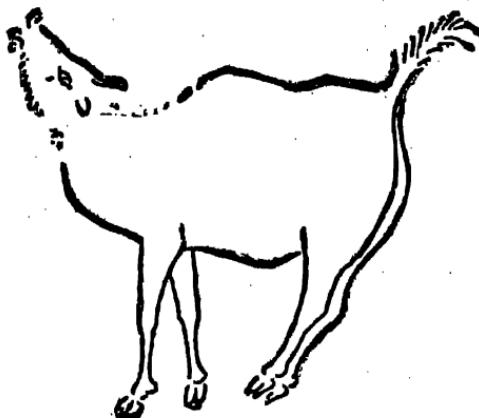


FIG. 7.

have ever achieved. Fig. 7 shows in outline a bison from Altamira. The certainty and completeness of the pose, the perfect rhythm and the astonishing verisimilitude of the movement are evident even in this. The Altamira drawings show a much higher level of accomplishment than those of the Bushmen, but the general likeness is so great as to have suggested the idea that the Bushmen are descendants of Palæolithic man who have remained at the same rudimentary stage as regards the other arts of life, and have retained something of their unique power of visual transcription.

Whether this be so or not, it is to be noted that all

the peoples whose drawing shows this peculiar power of visualisation belong to what we call the lowest of savages; they are certainly the least civilisable, and the South African Bushmen are regarded by other native races in much the same way that we look upon negroes. It would seem not impossible that the very perfection of vision, and presumably of the other senses<sup>1</sup> with which the Bushmen and Palæolithic man were endowed, fitted them so perfectly to their surroundings that there was no necessity to develop the mechanical arts beyond the elementary instruments of the chase. We must suppose that Neolithic man, on the other hand, was less perfectly adapted to his surroundings, but that his sensual defects were more than compensated for by increased intellectual power. This greater intellectual power manifested itself in his desire to classify phenomena, and the conceptual view of nature began to predominate. And it was this habit of thinking of things in terms of concepts which deprived him for ages of the power to see what they looked like. With Neolithic man drawing came to express man's thought about things rather than his sensations of them, or rather, when he tried to reproduce his sensations, his habits of thought intervened, and dictated to his hand orderly, lucid, but entirely non-naturalistic forms.

How deeply these visual-conceptual habits of Neolithic man have sunk into our natures may be seen by their effects upon hysterical patients, a statement which I owe to the kindness of Dr. Henry Head, F.R.S. If the word "chest" is mentioned most people see a vague image of a flat surface on which are marked the sternum and the pectoral muscles; when the word "back" is given, they see another flat or almost flat surface with markings of the spine and the shoulder-blades; but scarcely any one, having these two mental images called

<sup>1</sup>This is certainly the case with the Australian Bushmen.

up, thinks of them as parts of a continuous cylindrical body. Now, in the case of some hysterical patients anaesthesia is found just over some part of the body which has been isolated from the rest in thought by means of the conceptual image. It will occur, for instance, in the chest, but will not go beyond the limits which the conceptualised visual image of a chest defines. Or it will be associated with the concept hand, and will stop short at the wrists. It is not surprising, then, that a mode of handling the continuum of natural appearance, which dictates even the behaviour of disease, should have profoundly modified all artistic representations of nature since the conceptual habit first became strongly marked in Neolithic man. An actual definition of drawing given by a child may be quoted in this connection, "First I think, and then I draw a line round my think."

It would be an exaggeration to suppose that Palaeolithic and Bushman drawings are entirely uninfluenced by the concepts which even the most primitive people must form. Indeed, the preference for the profile view of animals—though as we have seen other aspects are frequent—would alone indicate this, but they appear to have been at a stage of intellectual development where the concepts were not so clearly grasped as to have begun to interfere with perception, and where therefore the retinal image passed into a clear memory picture with scarcely any intervening mental process. In the art of even civilised man we may, I think, find great variations in the extent to which the conceptualising of visual images has proceeded. Egyptian and Assyrian art remained intensely conceptual throughout, no serious attempt was made to give greater verisimilitude to the symbols employed. The Mycenæan artists, on the other hand, seem to have been appreciably more perceptual, but the Greeks returned to an intensely conceptualised symbolism in which some of their

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greatest works of art were expressed, and only very gradually did they modify their formulæ so as to admit of some approach to verisimilitude, and even so the appeal to vision was rather by way of correcting and revising accepted conceptual images than as the foundation of a work of art. The art of China, and still more of Japan, has been distinctly more perceptual. Indeed, the Japanese drawings of birds and animals approach

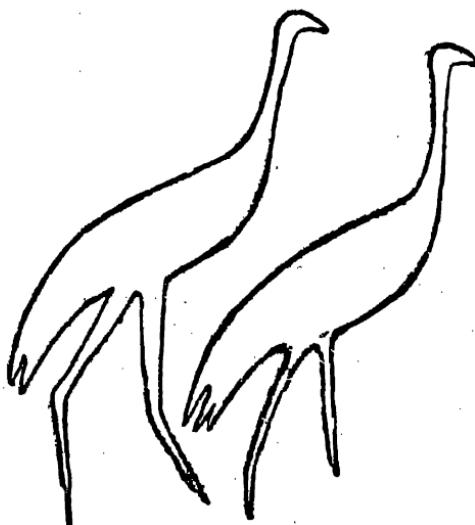


FIG. 8.

more nearly than those of any other civilised people to the immediacy and rapidity of transcription of Bushman and Palæolithic art. The Bushman silhouettes of cranes (Fig. 8) might almost have come from a Japanese screen. Like Japanese drawings, they show an alertness to accept the silhouette as a single whole instead of reconstructing it from separately apprehended parts. It is partly due to Japanese influence that our own Impressionists have made an attempt to get back

to that ultra-primitive directness of vision. Indeed they deliberately sought to deconceptualise art. The artist of to-day has therefore to some extent a choice before him of whether he will *think* form like the early artists of European races or merely *see* it like the Bushmen. Whichever his choice, the study of these drawings can hardly fail to be of profound interest. The Bushmen paintings on the walls of caves and sheltered rocks are fast disappearing; the race itself, of which Miss Bleek gives a fascinating account, is now nothing but a remnant. The treatment that they have received at the hands of the white settlers does not seem to have been conspicuously more sympathetic or intelligent than that meted out to them by negro conquerors, and thus the opportunity of solving some of the most interesting problems of human development has been for ever lost. The gratitude of all students of art is due to Miss Tongue and Miss Bleek, by whose zeal and industry these remains of a most curious phase of primitive art have been adequately recorded.

### NEGRO SCULPTURE<sup>1</sup>

WHAT a comfortable mental furniture the generalisations of a century ago must have afforded! What a right little, tight little, round little world it was when Greece was the only source of culture, when Greek art, even in Roman copies, was the only indisputable art, except for some Renaissance repetitions! Philosophy, the love of truth, liberty, architecture, poetry, drama, and for all we know music—all these were the fruits of a special kind of life, each assisted the development of the other, each was really dependent on all the rest. Consequently if we could only learn the

<sup>1</sup> *Athenæum*, 1920.

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Greek lessons of political freedom and intellectual self-consciousness all the rest would be added unto us.

And now, in the last sixty years, knowledge and perception have poured upon us so fast that the whole well-ordered system has been blown away, and we stand bare to the blast, scarcely able to snatch a hasty generalisation or two to cover our nakedness for a moment.

Our desperate plight comes home to one at the Chelsea Book Club, where are some thirty chosen specimens of negro sculpture. If to our ancestors the poor Indian had "an untutored mind," the Congolese's ignorance and savagery must have seemed too abject for discussion. One would like to know what Dr. Johnson would have said to any one who had offered him a negro idol for several hundred pounds. It would have seemed then sheer lunacy to listen to what a negro savage had to tell us of his emotions about the human form. And now one has to go all the way to Chelsea in a chastened spirit and prostrate oneself before his "stocks and stones."

We have the habit of thinking that the power to create expressive plastic form is one of the greatest of human achievements, and the names of great sculptors are handed down from generation to generation, so that it seems unfair to be forced to admit that certain nameless savages have possessed this power not only in a higher degree than we at this moment, but than we as a nation have ever possessed it. And yet that is where I find myself. I have to admit that some of these things are great sculpture—greater, I think, than anything we produced even in the Middle Ages. Certainly they have the special qualities of sculpture in a higher degree. They have indeed complete plastic freedom; that is to say, these African artists really conceive form in three dimensions. Now this is rare in sculpture. All archaic European sculpture—Greek and Romanesque, for instance—approaches plasticity

from the point of view of bas-relief. The statue bears traces of having been conceived as the combination of front, back, and side bas-reliefs. And this continues to make itself felt almost until the final development of the tradition. Complete plastic freedom with us seems only to come at the end of a long period, when the art has attained a high degree of representational skill and when it is generally already decadent from the point of view of imaginative significance.

Now, the strange thing about these African sculptures is that they bear, as far as I can see, no trace of this process. Without ever attaining anything like representational accuracy they have complete freedom. The sculptors seem to have no difficulty in getting away from the two-dimensional plane. The neck and the torso are conceived as cylinders, not as masses with a square section. The head is conceived as a pear-shaped mass. It is conceived as a single whole, not arrived at by approach from the mask, as with almost all primitive European art. The mask itself is conceived as a concave plane cut out of this otherwise perfectly unified mass.

And here we come upon another curious difference between negro sculpture and our own, namely, that the emphasis is utterly different. Our emphasis has always been affected by our preferences for certain forms which appeared to us to mark the nobility of man. Thus we shrink from giving the head its full development; we like to lengthen the legs and generally to force the form into a particular type. These preferences seem to be dictated not by a plastic bias, but by our reading of the physical symbols of certain inner qualities which we admire in our kind, such, for instance, as agility, a commanding presence, or a pensive brow. The negro, it seems, either has no such preferences, or his preferences happen to coincide more nearly with what his feeling for pure plastic design would dictate. For instance, the length, thinness, and isolation of

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our limbs render them extremely refractory to fine plastic treatment, and the negro scores heavily by his willingness to reduce the limbs to a succession of ovoid masses sometimes scarcely longer than they are broad. Generally speaking, one may say that his plastic sense leads him to give its utmost amplitude and relief to all the protuberant parts of the body, and to get thereby an extraordinarily emphatic and impressive sequence of planes. So far from clinging to two dimensions, as we tend to do, he actually underlines, as it were, the three-dimensionalness of his forms. It is in some such way, I suspect, that he manages to give to his forms their disconcerting vitality, the suggestion that they make of being not mere echoes of actual figures, but of possessing an inner life of their own. If the negro artist wanted to make people believe in the potency of his idols he certainly set about it in the right way.

Besides the logical comprehension of plastic form which the negro shows, he has also an exquisite taste in his handling of material. No doubt in this matter his endless leisure has something to do with the marvellous finish of these works. An instance of this is seen in the treatment of the tattoo cicatrices. These are always rendered in relief, which means that the artist has cut away the whole surface around them. I fancy most sculptors would have found some less laborious method of interpreting these markings. But this patient elaboration of the surface is characteristic of most of these works. It is seen to perfection in a wooden cup covered all over with a design of faces and objects that look like clubs in very low relief. The *gabbe* of this cup shows a subtlety and refinement of taste comparable to that of the finest Oriental craftsmen.

It is curious that a people who produced such great artists did not produce also a culture in our sense of the word. This shows that two factors are necessary to produce the cultures which distinguish civilised

peoples. There must be, of course, the creative artist, but there must also be the power of conscious critical appreciation and comparison. If we imagined such an apparatus of critical appreciation as the Chinese have possessed from the earliest times applied to this negro art, we should have no difficulty in recognising its singular beauty. We should never have been tempted to regard it as savage or unrefined. It is for want of a conscious critical sense and the intellectual powers of comparison and classification that the negro has failed to create one of the great cultures of the world, and not from any lack of the creative æsthetic impulse, nor from lack of the most exquisite sensibility and the finest taste. No doubt, also, the lack of such a critical standard to support him leaves the artist much more at the mercy of any outside influence. It is likely enough that the negro artist, although capable of such profound imaginative understanding of form, would accept our cheapest illusionist art with humble enthusiasm.

### ANCIENT AMERICAN ART<sup>1</sup>

NOTHING in the history of our Western civilisation is more romantic nor for us more tantalising than the story of the discovery and the wanton destruction of the ancient civilisations of America. Here were two complex civilisations which had developed in complete independence of the rest of the world; even so completely independent of each other that, for all their general racial likeness, they took on almost opposite characters. If only we could know these alternative efforts of the human animal to come to terms with nature and himself with something like the same fullness with which we know the civilisations

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of Greece and Rome, what might we not learn about the fundamental necessities of mankind? They would have been for us the opposite point of our orbit; they would have given us a parallax from which we might have estimated the movements of that dimmest and most distant phenomenon, the social nature of man. And as it is, what scraps of ill-digested and ill-arranged information and what fragments of ruined towns have to suffice us! Still, so fascinating is the subject that we owe Mr. Joyce<sup>1</sup> a debt of gratitude for the careful and thorough accumulation of all the material which the archæological remains afford. These by themselves would be only curious or beautiful as the case may be; their full value and significance can only come out when they are illustrated by whatever is known of their place in the historical sequence of the civilisations. Mr. Joyce gives us what is known of the outlines of Mexican and Peruvian history as far as it can be deciphered from the early accounts of Spanish invaders and from the original documents, and he brings the facts thus established to bear on the antiquities. Unfortunately for the reader of these books, the story is terribly involved and complicated even when it is not dubious. Thus in Mexico we have to deal with an almost inextricable confusion of tribes and languages having much in common, but each interpreting their common mythology and religion in a special manner. Even Greek mythology, which we once seemed to know fairly well, takes on under the pressure of modern research an unfamiliar formlessness—becomes indistinct and shifting in its outlines; and the various civilisations of Mexico each with its innumerable gods and goddesses with varying names and varying attributes, produce on the mind a sense of bewildering and helpless wonder,

<sup>1</sup> Thomas A. Joyce, (1) "South American Archæology," London (Macmillan), 1912; (2) "Mexican Archæology," London (Warner), 1914; (3) "Central American Archæology," and New York (Putnam), 1916.

and still more a sense of pervading horror at the underlying nature of the human imagination. For one quality emerges in all the different aspects of their religions, its hideous inhumanity and cruelty, its direct inspiration of all the most ingenious tortures both in peace and war—above all, the close alliance between religion and war and going with both of these the worship of suffering as an end in itself. Only at one point in this nightmare of inhumanity do we get a momentary sense of pleasure—itself a savage one—that is in the knowledge that at certain sacred periods the priests, whose main business was the torturing of others, were themselves subjected to the purificatory treatment. A bas-relief in the British Museum shows with grim realism the figure of a kneeling priest with pierced tongue, pulling a rope through the hole. Under such circumstances one would at least hesitate to accuse the priesthood of hypocrisy.

When we turn to Peru the picture is less grim. The Incas do not seem to have been so abjectly religious as the Aztecs; they had at least abolished human sacrifice, which the Aztecs practised on a colossal scale, and though the tyranny of the governing classes was more highly organised, it was inspired by a fairly humane conception.

But we must leave the speculations on such general questions, which are as regards these books incidental to the main object, and turn to the consideration of the archæological remains and the investigation of their probable sequence and dating.

Our attitude to the artistic remains of these civilisations has a curious history. The wonder of the Spanish invaders at the sight of vast and highly organised civilisations where only savagery was expected has never indeed ceased, but the interest in their remains has ranged from time to time. The first emotion they elicited besides wonder was the greed of the conquerors for the accumulated treasure. Then among the more

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cultivated Spaniards supervened a purely scientific curiosity to which we owe most of our knowledge of the indigenous legend and history. Then came the question of origins, which is still as fascinating and unsettled as ever, and to the belief that the Mexicans were the lost ten tribes of Israel we owe Lord Kingsborough's monumental work in nine volumes on Mexican antiquities. To such odd impulses perhaps, rather than to any serious appreciation of their artistic merits, we owe the magnificent collection of Mexican antiquities in the British Museum. Indeed, it is only in this country that, after contemplating them from every other point of view, we have begun to look at them seriously as works of art. Probably the first works to be admitted to this kind of consideration were the Peruvian pots in the form of highly realistic human heads and figures.<sup>1</sup>

Still more recently we have come to recognise the beauty of Aztec and Maya sculpture, and some of our modern artists have even gone to them for inspiration. This is, of course, one result of the general aesthetic awakening which has followed on the revolt against the tyranny of the Graeco-Roman tradition.

Both in Mexico and Peru we have to deal with at least two, possibly four, great cultures, each overthrown in turn by the invasion of less civilised, more warlike tribes, who gradually adopt the general scheme of the older civilisation. In Mexico there is no doubt about the superiority, from an artistic point of view, of the earlier culture—the Aztecs had everything to learn from the Maya, and they never rose to the level of their predecessors. The relation is, in fact, curiously like that of Rome to Greece. Unfortunately we have to learn almost all we know of Maya culture through their Aztec conquerors, but the ruins of Yucatan and Guatemala are by far the finest and most complete vestiges left to us.

<sup>1</sup>The Burlington Magazine, vol. xvii., p. 22 (April, 1910).

In Peru also we find in the Tihuanaco gateway a monument of some pre-Inca civilisation, and one that in regard to the art of sculpture far surpasses anything that the later culture reveals. It is of special interest, moreover, for its strong stylistic likeness to the Maya sculpture of Yucatan. This similarity prompts the interesting speculation whether the earlier civilisations of the two continents had either a common origin or points of contact, whereas the Inca and Aztec cultures seem to drift entirely apart. The Aztecs carry on at a lower level the Maya art of sculpture, whereas the Incas seem to drop sculpture almost entirely, a curious fact in view of the ambitious nature of their architectural and engineering works. One seems to guess that the comparatively humane socialistic tyranny of the Incas developed more and more along purely practical lines, whilst the hideous religiosity of the Aztecs left a certain freedom to the imaginative artist.

In looking at the artistic remains of so remote and strange a civilisation one sometimes wonders how far one can trust one's æsthetic appreciation to interpret truly the feelings which inspired it. In certain works one cannot doubt that the artist felt just as we feel in appreciating his work. This must, I think, hold on the one hand of the rich ornamental arabesques of Maya buildings or the marvellous inlaid feather and jewel work of either culture; and on the other hand, when we look at the caricatural realistic figures of Truxillo pottery we need scarcely doubt that the artist's intention agrees with our appreciation, for such a use of the figure is more or less common to all civilisations. But when we look at the stylistic sculpture of Maya and Aztec art, are we, one wonders, reading in an intention which was not really present? One wonders, for instance, how far external and accidental factors may not have entered in to help produce what seems to us the perfect and delicate balance between representational